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A New Novel by
LAURENCE NORTH—
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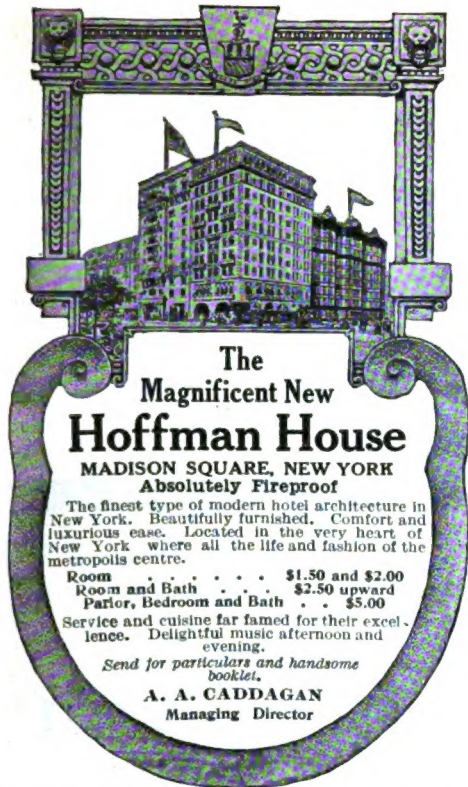
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A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

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SYRINX

By LAURENCE NORTH

UNDER the willows the boat rocked lightly, wooing its pilot to lengthen her dreams, but the girl, opening her eyes for a moment and noting the westering sun, roused herself and pulled out her watch. It had stopped.

"Damn!" she said deliciously, and was at once rebuked and informed by the chime of seven from Pangbury Church. She scrambled up, undid the painter, flung her book and cushions forward, pushed out and dropped down stream with slow, occasional strokes, wresting the last moments of enjoyment from the hour. Not for weeks had she been so much her own, had she achieved such complete escape from the tax of other individualities. For the greater part of her days she seemed to be always in quest of her own soul, which, like the shores of Italy before Æneas's bark, fled her approach or was obscured by the continual intrusion of circumstance. Not that she was a recluse, or that her circle was uncongenial—her friends were nearly all of her own fastidious choosing; but there came mornings of awakening when the need of escape grew urgent, and opportunity seldom coincided with desire, for part of her time was another's. To be perfect these retreats had to be secured by some trivial breach of faith. Today she should have run down to Brighton with a cloud of wits, but at the eleventh hour she avoided Victoria for Victoria District, ran out to Richmond, changed to the South Western and asked for a ticket to Shepperton. But at Pangbury she suddenly left the train, tempted by the early freshness of the mile under the trees to the

river, and there, finding a dainty single-sculler, she sought a backwater of many memories and gave herself over to herself.

She had been so happy that for once she ceased to analyze her emotions, and now as she dropped down to the boat house she was conscious only of a great rejuvenation and of an evenness of spirit that would carry her forward for perhaps twenty-four hours; with luck, perhaps for a week. She would be at any rate equal to the evening. Happily they would not blame her for desertion—they were too well trained in her ways for that; and the unexpected was one of the idols of the coterie. No one was supposed to be anything but casual; faith in such accidental bonds as mere appointments, regulated by those huge conventions, time and place, was not enrolled among their minor sanctities; those who met, met and were more or less bored, more or less amused, as occasion served; those who stayed away went unproved, and were welcomed perhaps a little more warmly if they kept the next tryst.

The next was to be at supper in town the same evening, and the girl had decided to keep it, unless, of course, the insistence of the paramount Ego intervened at the last moment. But it was still delightfully uncertain. She might miss the train, she knew, but the risk could not quicken her stroke by one in the minute. If she got there, well. If not, equally well; and possibly she would join the others quite late and make a distinguished entrance—if indeed there were others to join, for they might have elected to

stay at Brighton until the last train and let the meal go hang. Still, it was not every day that one of the celestial host was rich enough to give a Carolingian banquet, and the event was not lightly to be set aside. They would possibly all come and bring others. Zeus send that Maurice Laleham's sudden affluence would be equal to the added strain! Not that it mattered. A deficiency in the budget only heightened the comedy, and gave one or other of the confederacy a chance for choice, persuasive and, it was to be hoped, unexpected strokes of dialectic with those who only stand and wait. After all, Laleham could not have sold his picture for so very much. The casual guests were almost certain. There might be some gorgeous *contretemps*.

Was it possible that she was rowing faster?

The shadows were lengthening on the woods, gathering them into level masses of gold and gray; the river ran like an amber pavement right up to the eye of the west, as the boat shot across to the landing stage, breaking the perfect reflection of the boat house into great bars of swirling color edged with flame. The rower brought her boat up deftly, sprang ashore, propitiated the Master of Craft with a generous hand, and returned his "Good evening" with a smile that, within the hour, led him to charge himself with sin; for he was a young man, a strict Baptist and very much married.

To an epicure in contrasts, the latter half of the walk to the station, under the mantle of twilight pierced only by the low hung light of Venus, brought delight subtly accentuated by the memory of the path as she had trodden it that morning. The voyager's steps lagged luxuriously. This perfection for the blare of a fashionable restaurant—was it worth it? Far better, in the deep grass, to lie and watch that unfathomable sky and yonder regal star—

"O Aphrodite, Queen of Heaven!" she cried, stretching out her arms, her hands lightly curved upwards in invocation. "Peerless unknown, be near me—yet not too near!" Then softly

the first stanza of Sappho's ode thrilled on her lips:

"Guided with subtlest splendor, Aphrodite, Daughter of Zeus, immortal, sorceress guileful,

Break not my heart with sorrow on cruel sorrow,

Queen, I implore thee."

At the last line, the hoot-toot of a motor car contended with the Greek.

"Dash!" she broke off with a whimsical *moue*; "after all, it's the twentieth century, and what's the use of knowing some Greek when there's hardly anybody but the stars and the trees to speak to about it without seeming a prig and a bore!"

She stepped aside none too soon as the car panted past, and watched it splashing the avenue with lessening lamplight. "Oh, speed, how divine!" she exclaimed. "What a pity none of us can afford a motor! I should monopolize it."

"It is a far cry from Sappho to gasoline, anyway!"

She turned, and dimly made out a figure leaning over a gate embowered with roses. It is the easiest thing in the summer dusk to run almost against inconsiderate persons who lean over gates towards a darkening roadway. She had been standing close to this unsuspected listener for quite three minutes.

"From Sappho to gasoline, I suggest," the voice insisted, "is some little distance. No doubt the stars and the trees are the best audience; yet, incidentally, I am glad you used the original."

"There are no really possible translations," she replied. "All the same, I think you are rather rude. You should have left me to my trees and stars. Perhaps you can tell me when there's a train to town?"

"In about ten minutes; you are quite a quarter of an hour's walk from the station."

"And the next train?"

"Two hours later."

"Thank you very much. Good night."

"Good night. You will have a long wait—unless—let me add to my rude-

ness—you care to catch the first train. My car is at your service."

He flung open the gate as he spoke, fixed it back and ran up a short drive that curved before the house. There was the sound of an ignition handle, a spasmodic pant or two, and then the steady churn of cylinders. A moment later the motor swept out into the road.

"Jump in," he said. "There's no time to light the lamps. We'll risk it."

"You are really very daring," she assured him, as they plunged forward, "but your car is enchanting." She drew a long breath as the speed increased, and leaned back in ecstasy, watching the station lights leap towards them.

"You have three minutes to spare," he remarked as he helped her to alight. "Have you motored much?"

"Never before, but I've learned enough to know how wonderful a long spin must be. Thank you so much, and again good night."

She held out her hand. Under the uncertain station lamps she saw that he was a personable figure, compact and clean-limbed, in face no Adonis, but strong and kindly, with whimsical eyes and crisp hair slightly brindled over the temples. He, in turn, saw a form very supple and so flowing in its lines as to disguise its real voluptuousness, a face of perverse attractiveness, very perfect save the mouth, which bespoke overmuch emotionalism. Dark hair set low on the forehead and massed over the ears, mystical, sleepy, gray eyes that yet seemed all-comprehending—so much he learned in one glance.

"The old, unholy war—senses against intellect," he thought, and lifting his cap he mounted the car again.

"Our acquaintance," he remarked, "scarcely warrants my seeing you off. Besides, I have to keep up my character of the—was it the rudest man?"

"Most daring, I said; but how primitive you are! Surely the idea of 'keeping up a character'"—she gave the inverted commas by a subtle inflection—"has been sent long ago to the dustbin—by intelligent people."

He looked at her uneasily, suddenly

conscious of his banal phrase and piqued at her inverted commas. Then, recovering himself, he went on lightly: "Oh, I'm too much flattered that you allow me a place among the intelligent."

"Well, you see, I don't pose as the rudest woman—but I'll lose my train. Good night, and again thanks, a thousand thanks."

She nodded and turned away, but at the entrance to the station the porter stopped her.

"If you've come for the train, miss, I'm sorry; there's a bad breakdown at Twickenham, and I don't know when the line'll be clear."

"Indeed! How amusing! Then I must wait, I suppose." She smiled at the official and went in.

Her companion of the last seven minutes was also amused.

"Here, Parkes," he called to the porter.

"Yes, sir. Oh, it's you, Mr. Aken-side, and no lights! Can I see to your lamps for you?"

"Do, like a good man. How long before the line's clear?"

"Really can't say, sir; maybe an hour, maybe two; perhaps no more trains through tonight, sir. I hear as it's pretty bad."

"Well, good night, Parkes. Lamps all right? Ah, thanks."

He turned homeward, curiously shaken out of himself. Years of studious retirement, which had bred a calm satisfaction with his life and with his own methods of thought, seemed to have fallen from him. He was face to face with a new self and one that curiously resembled something he had been, heaven only knew how many years ago. It was provoking; it was painful; it was—there was the devil of it!—ineffably sweet. He had fancied himself still in the first flight—did he not keep a motor car?—when he came down to the gate tonight for his cigar and reverie in the twilight—and now he knew himself for a foggy. There was a world of palpitating life somewhere in London under the faint glare to the eastward. Once it had called him and he had resisted. He had even come to believe that he

held it all in contempt. There were a few masters, with whom he held communion; the new schools were chaff—all for this "How primitive you are!"—confound this witch!—and hardly half a dozen sentences exchanged between them. Well, the door was shut; young life and he had parted long ago.

He was at his own gate again, but he did not drive the car in. First he tested his supply of gasoline and nodded savagely to find it ample. Then, leisurely lighting a fresh cigar, he strolled up to the house and entered. After a minute or two he returned, wearing his driving coat and goggles. He put several things into the car and for a few minutes he paced up and down, smoking furiously; then he got in and drove off at a very moderate speed. Twice within the next two minutes he stopped, and once he swung the car completely round, but his destination was certain.

"Are you sufficiently amused?" he inquired, coming up to the girl where she stood trying to read under the lamp at the far end of the platform.

She started ever so little, but kept her self-possession.

"No, I'm sufficiently bored; but how fascinatingly horrible your goggles are! Did you put them on to amuse me?"

"Chiefly, but not quite as you suppose."

"You are overwhelmingly considerate. Can you tell me, will the line be clear soon?"

"They say it will not be clear till midnight, if then."

"I'm not sure that even your goggles would amuse me till the small hours; but I have still the trees and the stars."

"And Sappho? 'Sweet evening star that bringest all things home,' you know."

"Yes, Sappho if you like, but no gasoline."

"You may have all you want—enough, at least, to take you back to town."

"I understand. *Deus ex machina!* But suppose I'm not dying to get back to town by other than parliamentary means?"

"In that case I retire—"

"Hurt?"

"No; a failure with a good conscience."

"Conscience is a purely Philistine prejudice; a good conscience Philistine without the merit of being a prejudice. I believe I must save you from that degradation and come."

"As Your Ladyship pleases. It will, at least, be a new sensation."

"You forget I came here in the car."

He looked at her and met only the face of a sphinx.

They had gone down the steps and were out on the road once more. About them hung the fragrance of the June evening.

He got up beside her and took the wheel.

For the first ten minutes of rush and whirl she leaned back in sheer ecstasy of motion. Then she asked:

"When shall we reach town?"

"Shortly after nine."

"So soon?"

"The car is running very well. Of course it can go slower if you wish to avoid an appointment."

"Not one throb slower. It is divine! As for appointments, I don't recognize the word."

"Anyhow, I must slow down going through Richmond, and then for the rest of the way. By the bye"—he hesitated and reminded her of a schoolboy confessing some cardinal sin—"as I object to trade on a chance meeting, I don't mean to ask for your address. I'll take you to the most convenient point and then—"

"Don't say you'll retire with a good conscience."

"I shall simply retire, without ethical bias. Where shall it be?"

She considered for a moment. "British Museum, please."

Just within the limit of the law they swept through Kew and Chiswick, and so along the great western approach to London. At last the Museum, mysterious in the blue of the London night, heaved itself dimly against the sky. Under its mighty shadow the car drew up.

"I sha'n't make any pretty speeches," she said, as he helped her to alight. "Perhaps you've only brought me to an evening's boredom. I don't know why I came, but it's been a ripping drive."

"Then we part quits." He stooped to start the car.

"Scarcely," she interposed. "My turn now. One of my friends, who is rich for five minutes, is giving a supper at the Carlovingian tonight—at least, I believe he is, if they get back from Brighton in time. We're always free to add to the party as chance ordains. I don't know whether you'd care . . ." She stopped, and for the first time her manner seemed a little self-conscious.

He knew that hesitation meant ruin.

"With pleasure—and the hour?"

"Half-past ten, or as near it as our vow of irresponsibility permits."

"And supposing my irresponsible sponsor fails to turn up?"

"For once I'm trapped into an obligation! How tedious!" She swore gently in a strange tongue.

"I release you!"

"Don't!"

"As you will, then. *Au revoir!*"

The car turned and shot westward along Great Russell Street. "I wonder," he said to himself, "what she would say if she knew I recognized the language she swore in? What used Bismarck to say when there was trouble? *Cherchez les—*" he left the name of the nationality unspoken. "Well, they are the most fascinating women in Europe; and every man is a fool once, in a way, only I'm late in beginning."

The girl, as she climbed the stairs to her fourth floor lodging, hummed a chanson of Yvette Guilbert's. It had been a wonderful day; perhaps it might be more wonderful still. "Anyhow," she thought, "he has not the futile habit of curiosity. Perhaps we shall never know each other's names. And, after all, it doesn't much matter."

She unlocked her door, turned up the light on a room of adorable disorder and rushed to her mirror. For the next half-hour her history was purely femi-

nine, man being concerned only with the result.

When everything was complete she took up her cloak, only to let it fall.

"If they shouldn't come!" she exclaimed, pressing her hands to her forehead. "Oh, Ashtaroth, what a fix!"

She ran back to the dressing table and unlocked a little casket mysteriously wrought in green metal. From it she took three sovereigns and counted them into her purse.

"It'll break me," she laughed—"but there should be a run for my money!"

II

THE supper crowd had hardly begun to assemble when Robert Akenside entered the Palm Court of the Carlovingian. Only one or two groups were in possession of the place, and he strolled carelessly past them to see whether he could discover any that might form his hostess's court. Court, he felt sure, must be the word. Within earshot of one party he sat down and deliberately went eavesdropping.

There were five men and three girls, whose appearance was removed from the commonplace of fashion. One of the men was very tall, with the face of a Roman emperor; another burly, with a curiously Thackerayan massiveness of head and bluntness of profile—an intellectual prize fighter, Akenside labeled him; the third small and whimsical, with abundant gesture and flow of mordant wit; the fourth a healthy young cricketer with the stamp of the public service, faint but undeniable, upon him. He seemed to have strayed by mistake into that company. The fifth, who bore on his cheek the pallid ensign of the minor poet, suggested laborious days of intellectual growth in a mushroom cellar. He said nothing, but looked ineffably sweet. The others ignored him, and Akenside supposed he must be deaf and dumb.

The girls were contemptuous of fashion, and with a success that could have sprung only from knowledge, sug-

gested Botticelli. Christian names or pseudonyms seemed to be the rule.

"So," Akenside reflected, feeling sure of his ground, "they have not waited for the last train, after all. The unguessed link between us, however, seems likely to remain undiscovered." He listened for some clue to her identity.

At last the tall man held out his watch. "Why wait?" he queried. "Aspasia is evasive again."

"She would be the last to suggest obligation," said the little man. "By all means let's go in."

They moved towards the supper room. Akenside rose and went down to the door. Obviously, he could not wait too long. If she came very late and found him still faithful—well, the score was hers; and his pride—oh, curse his pride!—yet there it was. He had better make his escape before he played a deeper fool. The memory of the drive ought to suffice. It must suffice. Nothing could ever spoil it if he left things just as they were. Why tempt the unknown, when the known had been so wonderful within its limits? There was something to be said for Positivism.

He returned to the vestibule. It would be best to evade what might be a stupid complication while there was time. And yet—and yet—confound her!—a woman who quoted Sappho to the afterglow was not found at every hedgeside, and tonight she had stopped close to his. And her attitude, even to the slightly upcurving palms, how perfectly classical in its adoration! He remembered a certain vase painting. Then his mocking demon assailed him with Jaques's quizzical phrase: "'Tis a Greek invocation, to call fools into a circle."

He reached the cloak room barrier and began to fumble for his number. The delay was his undoing. Already she was at his side, a whirl of flowing draperies. He understood at once that the lines were long, clinging and severe; that he had never seen anything quite so far removed from the commonplace in style, and yet the effect had been obtained without any strain on sump-

tuary laws. Other women, arriving from the earlier plays, stared their disapproval.

"Indecent hussy!" said one, whose *décolleté* attire betrayed an abundant and far-reaching grossness. The maligned heard, and returned the stare with gentle irony.

"Delicately phrased; but you'll take me in all the same?" she flashed to Akenside.

He bowed and put himself on guard. They passed on.

"Do you know," she pursued, "as I came out of the cloak room on the other side, I fancied for a moment you were trying to run away. You hadn't quite the air of the man who had just left his hat. I know I'm very late. Were you?"

"Late?" he parried.

"Yes—late," she conceded deliberately, assured of his guilt and choosing to be merciful.

"Not a moment too soon," he met her eyes admiringly. "I would not have missed one instant of you. Here one can see—out yonder the stars were inadequate, the trees an encumbrance."

"You may run away now if you like," she cried wickedly. "One glance is as good as another, and the first perhaps better. Repetition may be tedious. By the bye, it occurred to me after we parted that you mightn't be able to come—the wedding garment, you know!"

"I keep a spare suit at my club."

"Then these sudden flights to town with distressed damsels—are they usual?"

"Of course. I'm Grand Commander of a new Order of Knights Errant, pledged to succor belated beauty."

"And you always get asked to supper afterwards?"

"How otherwise explain the evening clothes?"

"Your credentials seem to be in order. Still, I'm disappointed. I don't like to think my adventure hackneyed."

"Believe me, it was unique."

"I hate the word; it's too like Christie's catalogue!"

They had stopped in the center of the Palm Court. As they chatted, she searched the hall with a faint look of annoyance.

"I don't see them," she remarked casually.

"Perhaps they have gone in to supper," he suggested; "let us go and see."

They had reached the farther room. At a far table Akenside saw the party he had already noted. One of them rose and looked in their direction, but sat down again abruptly. Akenside's companion glanced round, but gave no sign of recognition.

"Not here after all?" he queried.

A light of mischievous impulse came into her eyes. She turned her back on the distant group. "Not visible," she said lightly.

"No matter," he pursued. "Here's a table for two. We shall get along well enough by ourselves."

"On one condition then!" She faced him steadily.

"What?"

"It's my party."

"Rubbish!"

"But otherwise—you see—you might think—" she blushed faintly, exquisitely. "The fact remains, you came here as my guest. There's no going back on it. It's that or good-bye at once."

"Very well," he said bluntly, and they sat down.

"It's such ages since I've had a Carlovianian supper," she said, "I forget my way about the *menu*. You choose."

"I've lived the simple life so long with an inartistic and unimaginative old housekeeper that gastronomy is a lost art to me. However, what do you say to this and this and this to follow?"

"The art is not beyond recall, I see, but might we just have this instead of that? There are subtleties of harmony—don't look shocked, please; your housekeeper will soon bring you back to righteousness and rice pudding. As for the harmonies—I know a man who has a case of liqueurs—he calls it the Gamut—all arranged in intervals, and he combines them in chords and progressions."

"Can he always avoid sequent fifths or eighths?"

"What a pedant you are! Why should he avoid them? You know what wonders Grieg worked in the piano and violin sonata and in some of his songs when he broke the law of fifths."

"I know!" he exclaimed, kindling at her enthusiasm.

She nodded and took up the wine list.

"No, that is mine," he objected, "but I forbid harmonies or even the most ravishing discords. Shall we say a little champagne?"

She made a grave little gesture of dissent. "Does our acquaintance warrant it?" she asked with a mocking echo of something he had said when their acquaintance was hardly two minutes old.

"That's for you to say."

"Well, you won't mind if I say 'No'? Let's keep to something fearfully and wonderfully light and unimaginative—and lots of seltzer," she added.

Her caution flung Akenside back to wariness. Since he entered the door of the Carlovianian he had drifted merrily with the moment and had forgotten his habitual bondage to the afterthought. Now his tyrant awoke refreshed. The position was anomalous, ridiculous, compromising. He was not wholly unknown in London. Some of his friends used the Carlovianian, he knew. Probably this—adventuress—he stumbled uncomfortably over the word—was better known than himself. He fell to studying the eyes before him, questioning their mystery. He read daring, rebellion, fearless understanding of many things, misunderstanding doubtless of a few, but withal a great reassurance. Here was not the inevitable vulgarity of soiled wings. Mind and body alike had some subtle power of evading and rebuking the vulgar. A touchstone in flesh and blood—she seemed to convict other women of some common strain. She would not be popular with other women. He would not have her so. *He* would not, forsooth! What was *Aspasia* to him or he to *Aspasia* half a dozen hours ago?

"I fear I've been woolgathering," he said, suddenly recovering himself.

"You've certainly been Quakerish, but don't fancy you've bored me if you intend apologizing. Jowett's rule was excellent: 'Never retreat; never explain; never apologize.' That's how the world came to be governed by Balliol men. As for not speaking, a friend you can't be silent with is no friend at all."

His guard went up again at her frankness. That sudden enrollment among her friends, however flattering, was disconcerting. If this witch was to talk thus he would be off his feet immediately. He did not regret the exclusion of the champagne.

The slight freezing of his manner warned her that he had been flattered by her aphorism. She smiled with a long, slow tolerance.

"How vain men are!" she said. "They catch at the windiest straws of compliment."

He understood and flushed slightly, but checked a retort midway.

"Adorable wretch!" he exclaimed, and was maliciously pleased with the blush that answered him. "We don't quite monopolize the vanity."

"But women have usually reason; men never!"

"I catch at no more straws."

"Don't brag. You *must* catch, and as surely you must drown in the flood of self-conceit."

"Unless, presumably, we are saved by a woman."

"Of straw? Is any man worth it?"

"That's your affair entirely. Personally, I should doubt it."

"I don't doubt. I know."

"Oh, wonder of wonders! In an agnostic age!"

"You are horribly out of date. The age is no longer agnostic; it is almost childishly credulous. I know a girl who thought she had nothing to live for; she'd got the better of all illusions—all beliefs. The other day a palmist read her hand and told her quite brilliant things. You've no idea how it has bucked her up."

"At any rate, she'd got enough belief

to please Mr. Westerton. You see I glance at modernity."

"Then you do know Mr. Westerton. His mind goes delightfully sideways, like a lovely crab, but he grows sadly Philistine. I fear he lectures too often to young men's associations. He's in danger of being mutually improved, which is intellectual death."

"You have no mercy on Philistines."

"I would shoot them all."

"And inherit the earth delicately with the remaining half-dozen elect?"

She looked at him curiously. "'Delicately' is good," she said. "So you put the remnant at half a dozen? That's rather nice of you."

"From your point of view, yes."

"Don't be unpleasant. Would you expect to make one of the six?"

"I don't flatter myself. Before I met you, I'd have thought it possible, but now—"

"I've no faith in sudden conversions. Best continue in the old illusion."

"You admit it was an illusion?"

"Everything is a series of illusions."

"Then, by all means, let us continue in some of them." He let his eyes rest on her as he spoke. She met them without concession, without challenge. He knew that he had pressed an unwarrantable advantage of sentiment.

From where he sat he could see through the occasional openings in the crowd that the other group had nearly finished supper. When they rose, they came close to the table. He watched eagerly, but they passed without a sign of recognition; all, until the last, the tall man, who half turned and bowed to Akenside's companion.

"Stay a moment, Maurice," she said, holding out her hand. "I want to introduce you to my very old friend, Mr. Motorman, of whom you've never heard. Mr. Motorman—Mr. Laleham."

Akenside permitted himself to bow, and resolved for that night to have no more to do with amazement.

"It's charming to meet you," Laleham remarked, offering his hand, "for I owe you a deep grudge. You've stolen my chief guest, but I hope you'll both come to coffee with the rest of us."

They thanked him, and he was turning away, when the girl again stopped him.

"Maurice," she said with, Akenside thought, a slightly strained eagerness, "why did the others cut me?"

"You deserve ostracism," Laleham replied, "to imagine such a thing. It looks as if you'd set up a conscience, and a bad one at that. We agreed it would look awkward for everyone to make the half-twisted bow, so I took the honor on myself for the crowd."

"It was certainly more artistic," she conceded.

Laleham moved easily away.

"Isn't he a dear?" she asked Akenside.

"It's not an adjective I keep for men. A distinguished-looking person, if you like, with some tags of philosophy which may or may not mean knowledge."

"There, your speech betrays you! I knew you were a don!"

"We were not to ask each other's history, I think. But if I confess that I am sometime fellow of Amiel—doesn't it sound like a title page?—will you tell me how you come to know the breed by mark of mouth, as it were?"

"Merely Maggie Hall," she answered carelessly.

"Hence, of course, Sappho—and the beginning of this adventure," he murmured.

She bit a salted almond impatiently. "The others are waiting for us. Come and let me introduce you to the Polite Outcasts."

"By the bye," he exclaimed in some confusion as they rose, "I don't even know your name. Mayn't it be awkward? Won't they wonder?"

"They will not wonder. But there's an easy way if you fear any difficulty. Call me what you hear them call me."

"So be it then, Aspasia."

She faced him angrily. "Is that name mere erudition? If so, I hate you—"

"Believe me, no. I used it in good faith."

"Then you are a thought reader?"

"No, only an eavesdropper—before you came in."

"I see," she said after a puzzled

moment. "Why didn't you tell me the others were here?"

"Was it necessary? Besides," he added as he saw her wince, "I wasn't quite sure of them."

"No, of course you couldn't be sure, but it would have been kind. You know I'm rather shortsighted. Now we really must go."

He followed her, reproaching himself for certain suspicions.

III

"Who is he, Maurice?"

The chorus in the Palm Court rose with one voice.

"A very old friend, she says; Motor-man is his name."

"The family, sir," said the little man, whom they called Dr. Johnson, "must be of recent growth, or the name is an extraordinarily intelligent anticipation of events."

"Please put the dictionary man to bed for tonight, Dr. Johnson, I implore you," and the tallest of the girls clasped her hands before the little man in burlesque entreaty.

"No, madam," boomed the other, "he is not going to bed when so admirable a point for inquiry and ratiocination has come under his very eyes. Would it be in character, do you suppose?"

"The Doctor was very fond of bed, you remember."

"Yes, madam, in the morning."

"It was a bad day for us when you swallowed Boswell alive," another of the girls remarked. "I wonder we keep you, Doctor. One day we'll expel you for a hopeless pedant."

"For a hopeful pedant, you mean. It's my very hopelessness, is it not, that endears me to this society. If you had a really hopeful pedant to deal with—"

"The gods forbid!" Laleham exclaimed piously. "But here comes Aspasia with her chauffeur. Shall I introduce generally in our own way?"

The others agreed in a delicate murmur.

"Mr. Motorman, let me present you to the Polite Outcasts, so called because they are the only real insiders in London."

Akenside bowed, and finding a place beside Cassandra Freemantle and Marie Basing, began to talk to them, quite wittily, they thought, for an antediluvian. Perfectly at his ease, he gave himself up to the stream of small talk that flowed as naturally as if no new element had been introduced into the company. Very good talk it was, and he wondered where they had got hold of it all. They seemed to know everything quite inevitably, and on some subjects he found they were considerably beyond him, particularly the more intellectual drama of the day. The Scandinavian and Russian movement interested him a little when the Northmen first hurled themselves like a new barbarian invasion against the citadel of British preconceptions. He had his own opinion of them, colored rather more than less by a persuasion of the supremacy of the Attic drama; but of the existence of anything of compelling worth nearer home he was scarcely aware, or if he was aware he was entirely skeptical. But here were girls who talked of things (at which their mothers would have died) with a philosophic candor and insight, a firmness and delicacy of thought and phrase that never for an instant compromised their modesty.

He looked at them as he had looked at Aspasia, with a great marvel of questioning, and everywhere the answer was the same—reassurance. He had heard of "emancipation" and had associated it with bicycles, blatancy and flats in Chenies Street, short hair, spectacles and ineffable frowziness. That freedom he had delighted to call the deeper bondage, when he saw it reflected in the satirical or comic papers, and he brushed it aside with a sardonic prophecy of early extinction, but this manifestation was something to reckon with. What if, after all, there was indeed a new spirit? What if the old gods were destined to fall before the new—goddesses? Well, he would not

object to play the part of an old god; but he was only a gray, or say a grizzled, ass, dazzled for a night by the spell of one unexpected personality. No doubt he was reading into the others the glories of his incomparable Aspasia. His? Oh, mockery! Was this at length the onset of senility?

So ran the undertone of his thought, while his tongue surprised him with a return to rapier play that recalled the days of the Junior Common Room. Later in his life Senior Common Rooms had valued a riper development of the same dexterity over the fruit and wine, but donnish wit grows ultra-esoteric and loses itself in the quicksands of bookishness. Since he had resigned his fellowship and gone to live on the unlooked-for legacy of a distant kinsman, he had courted society little, and the art of conversation had rusted. But here out came the old foil, bright as ever, and it amused him to find that it was the merrier weapon of the J. C. R., rather than the two-edged and sometimes poisoned sword of the senior's after-dinner fencing.

He had never cared for the idea that made women free of tobacco, and he seemed to be rather the spectator of another Robert Akenside than the man he believed he knew when he found himself handing his cigarette case first to Marie Basing and then to Cassandra. Glancing across the little table at Aspasia, he read the request in her eye, and when she had chosen he held the match for all three and then lighted his own.

Just then Aspasia looked at the clock.

"In five minutes," she remarked, "a paternal government will fling us upon the street."

"As though we were reservists," sighed Lansdowne.

"See, the lights are beginning to go down," said Laleham. "The night is too young for us to separate. Who comes on to my studio?"

"Everybody," the others assented in a chorus that Akenside thought rather noisy. He was beginning to excuse himself, but Aspasia's "Do come!" sent

him back to the paths of folly. The girls went to seek their cloaks and the men strolled toward the door.

Murmuring to Laleham that he had forgotten something, Akenside went back to the supper room and found the waiter who had served at Aspasia's feast.

"My bill," he said.

"It is paid, sir."

"But how—my guest didn't—no—I must have seen—"

"Oh, no, sir, but the gentleman who had the other party said you and the lady were his guests—it was included—Thank you very much, very much indeed, sir."

"Confound his princeliness!" Akenside muttered as he went after the others; "but I am obliged to him in a way—bless her sweet forgetfulness!"

He had been on tenterhooks for the last half-hour over the bill and could see no way out of his bargain.

"I've just discovered," he said to Laleham as they waited at the door, "that I've been your guest. Most good of you to include the unknown."

"*Les amis de nos amis sont nos amis*," Laleham returned with beautifully feigned affability. "The Polite Outcasts never bring the wrong people, however unexpected."

Akenside bowed and looked narrowly at his man, conscious of a faint discomfort; but neither in eye nor lip could he read overt satire.

"The fellow," he reflected, "wears his mask superbly."

When the girls returned, hansoms were called and the company seemed to pair off as if by natural selection. Laleham placed himself close to Aspasia.

"We are an odd number," he exclaimed; "someone will have to sit bodkin."

"Or let three take a growler," Aspasia suggested.

"Far better," said Lovat, "the tactics of Padua: a rush for the door and let the devil, or a solitary hansom, take the hindmost."

Before Akenside knew what was happening, the idea bit; the party surged in a storm of delighted laughter to the

entrance and he found himself odd man out.

"You young people are too quick for an old fogey," he remarked as they disentangled themselves on the pavement.

"Do come with us," Aspasia called, leaning over the apron of the hansom that held her and Laleham; "there's lots of room."

"Thank you, no; that wouldn't be cricket," he laughed back and took the end cab of the row.

"Where to, sir?" Jehu inquired, confidentially.

"Ah—er—where the deuce—oh, follow the others."

"Very good, sir," said the man, with offensive comprehension.

It was symbolical, he reflected, that physically as well as spiritually on this night of nights Robert Akenside should not know where he was going.

IV

His first impression of Laleham's studio was of a spacious and rather gaunt room from which the genius of order had been expelled with a hay fork. But there was, after all, some sort of focus in the room, and there was no questioning the taste of its owner: the Persian rugs and scraps of drapery were what they professed to be; there was an oak chest or two of indisputable age and irreproachable design, some odds and ends of brasswork, pewter, armor, costumes, the usual painter's things and many delightful books. At one end stood a bust of Socrates; facing it another of Verlaine. The seats, too few for the company, were headed by a luxurious Chesterfield rather the worse for wear. On this Aspasia flung herself full length, others disposing themselves as they could on the odd chairs and chests, while the rest sat on the floor. Then Akenside saw that the arrangement centered more or less fanwise on a piano—a baby grand—which stood in one corner. Its presence was more than taken for granted. It seemed to emanate personality; there

was a note of expectancy towards it almost as if that company of tense nerves were waiting for the instrument to respond of its own accord to their growing emotionalism.

For a moment there was silence, and Akenside chose Laleham, who was handing cigarettes, as the most likely player.

"The fellow looks as if the post would suit him," he reflected, and he was disappointed when the unpicturesque Dr. Johnson, otherwise Sam Taylor, crossed the room and sat down at the keyboard.

"He"—Akenside groaned inwardly—"with his chickpea face! A comic song for a ducat! Well, what else did one deserve?" So he closed his eyes resignedly.

Heavens! What was this? Mr. Robert Akenside, ex-fellow of Amiel, with the Hertford, the Ireland and every other academic distinction to his name, opened his eyes and stared at the player.

Those slow chords, that majestic onset as of a gathering host of tumultuous passions—was it really the greatest of the Rhapsodies?—or was this wag only a terribly clever parodist pre-luding profanely with great themes before he broke into something trivial, just as he travestied the Johnsonian speech and manner? But no—oh, this was tremendous—overwhelming! The music swelled, contended, clamored, rushed in purple riot, hastened with moods of unutterable pathos to its last note of negation.

Once, while the spell lasted, Akenside had glanced round the studio at the circle of bewitched listeners. Last of all, he dared to look at Aspasia. She had raised herself half upright and was leaning towards Laleham, who had seated himself carelessly on the arm of the lounge when the player began. As the harmony surged onward, the girl's hand just touched ever so lightly the hand that lay on Laleham's knee. At the sight of the caress, so simple and unconscious, Akenside awoke to new meanings in the music.

He did not trust himself to look again.

It was over; the bow of overstrained feeling unbent in sighs and subdued murmurs. There was no applause, but Taylor, flashing a glance at his hearers, found his reward in their eyes. Olivia Hope's were glistening; she crossed over to the piano and lifted Sam's fingers to her lips.

"I see you are frightfully shocked, Mr. Motorman, but it's all right, or rather all wrong; they're engaged."

Akenside turned swiftly and found Aspasia at his side.

"All right—all wrong—" he stammered, losing his presence of mind.

"Yes, obtuse man; all right that they should—thank each other so—all wrong that they should have got engaged. We nearly blackballed them for it; but as they'll have to be expelled when they come to the final *reductio ad absurdum* they remain on sufferance. The Doctor is sometimes boring, the Rhapsodist indispensable."

"And when he marries?"

"He will be a Rhapsodist no longer—"

But Aspasia's answer was drowned in a wild shout: "Forfeit, forfeit!" and the crowd closed round Akenside.

He turned a bewildered questioning face to Aspasia.

"You've mentioned the forbidden thing and must pay in kind," she explained.

"No, guests don't come under the law; only the fully initiated."

"Since when, Maurice?"

Laleham bit his lip. "Since the Medes and Persians."

"Well, we are above them; we alter every law. The ritual, quick! Let the Vehmgericht sit."

Aspasia took a sheet of notepaper from the writing table, tore it into slips and gave one to each of the company save the accused. Somebody found a pencil, and in a minute or two the dooms were recorded and thrown into a bronze urn. Then Aspasia, blindfolded, drew the lot and handed it to Laleham.

With a slight shiver Akenside heard his sentence.

"It is fearfully original," Laleham remarked ironically. "The person who wrote it ought to be found out and pun-

ished, but there is no appeal. Mr. Motorman will bow to the wittiest, kneel to the prettiest and kiss the one he loves best."

For a moment the condemned stood calling on all his gods not to rob him of self-possession. Then slowly advancing to the bust of Socrates, he bowed and knelt. Rising, he solemnly touched the philosopher's brow with his lips.

The court dissolved in laughter, and before it died, Taylor had sat down to the piano again and begun to play a slow and persuasive waltz. The men pushed the furniture to the wall and in a moment the floor was filled with dancers. Akenside stood watching them in a dream. The Polite Outcasts danced as they did everything else, perfectly. After one turn with Laleham, Aspasia broke away from him and came up to her guest.

"You dance?" she said with a mischievous invitation.

"Not for years. I seem to remember a Commemoration Ball before the Flood when I led out the daughters of Babel—it's a lost art for me, I fear. Set me down if I am too clumsy . . ."

Was it four hours or six or a hundred years since he had heard the verses from Sappho floating in a golden voice through the scented summer twilight? Had æons flown since that mad drive to town, or only moments? Was he indeed Pan, pursuer of the maiden Syrinx down the vale of Mænalus, only to clasp a reed that would break and pierce his heart?

Gods and men, we are all deluded thus;

It breaks in our bosom and then we bleed.

So ran the song, and the rhythm beat itself into the music. But it was enough that he clasped the maiden; even if the next moment brought the pang of disillusion, this, at least, was ecstasy. He had not dreamed that flying time had any roses left for him to gather.

It was over. Taylor had quickened the time towards the end and had brought the dancers up with a tumultuous flourish. The girls fell away like a drift of rose petals, and the floor was empty. Akenside led Aspasia to a seat, holding

her hand as lightly as he might, for when the music no longer justified that sacred contact, he felt a sudden dread of her thrilling vitality.

"It's quite wonderful," she said, "how the old bad habits endure even without practice."

He looked at her uncomfortably. "I fear I was a sad rhinoceros."

"The daughters of Babel had no cause for complaint."

"The fairest of them all is very patient."

She did not murmur the formula of thanks, but sank down, a radiant vision of pleasure.

"Don't you think," she exclaimed, "that dancing brings one so much nearer to reality, to the ideal, the only real? One imagines possibilities of a swifter and more rhythmic life, if we'd been made rather differently. That's why Puritans condemn it. It exposes the pedestrian mood—which they live to glorify."

"But if the dancing mood had been normal, wouldn't it have seemed pedestrian too?"

"Perhaps, but we could have still reached out to something even swifter; the dancing mood would have been the dancing mood all the same, whatever its degree. Nothing can steal its eternal possibilities."

"Except rheumatism—and age."

"You ghoul! Age!" She buried her face in her hands and shuddered. Presently she looked up and brought Laleham to her side with a laughing remark.

Akenside rose and went over to Taylor, who had thrown away his Johnsonian pose, and the two men talked music for a little while. Very soon Olivia joined them.

"If we are to find cabs at all, Sam—" she began.

"I'll go out and call some," Taylor said, and he took his hat and cloak. The other girls were seeking their wraps.

"So soon?" Laleham cried in protest, and Akenside overheard Aspasia murmur something about the Museum at ten o'clock and a heavy day in store for her. His pulse quickened as he

realized that fortune had sent him a clue. Laleham's next words were even more disturbing.

"That vulture Hardiman is overworking you. Why submit?"

"Duty," she replied mock-heroically, "and the absurd need of earning one's daily bread respectably. There's no escape."

"No?" he questioned with a meaning in his voice that made Akenside tingle. "No?"

"No," Aspasia echoed, with a new hardness, "certainly not, and—Maurice—please don't—any more—it hurts—"

Laleham's reply was lost in Taylor's cry:

"Our ladies' chariots stop the way. There's only enough for them; the men must walk."

"Good morning, Mr. Motorman. It was delightful meeting you again, after—eternity."

"Eternity, believe me, begins again with your going."

"The eighteenth century and Queen Anne are dead or ought to be. Really, whether we meet again or not, do please give up that pedantic style. You would be almost quite nice, you know, without stilts."

She curtsied exquisitely and, without offering her hand, she turned to Laleham.

"Put me in my cab, Maurice. Olivia comes with me. I'll set her down at her club. Bid the man drive there first."

Refusing Laleham's offer of whisky, Akenside left the other men in the studio and went out into the chill gray light of the coming dawn. Slightly at a loss as to where he was, he took the first turning at random, and for a while threaded unfamiliar streets, scarcely caring whither he went. Above the tumult in his brain swam two words, "Museum" and "Hardiman." They meant everything to him, everything and nothing; they were the keys to the most delicious of mysteries, but keys that he might not use. From the distance sounded the dull *pad-pad* of a weary horse. He let the crawling hansom overtake him and persuaded the

driver to take him to the New Oxonian.

The night porter, he fancied, looked at him with compassion as he entered the club.

"Call me at eleven," he told the man.

He hoped that the storm of unfamiliar emotions would not conquer the sleep of utter fatigue. But at forty the antics of one-and-twenty exact their own penalty.

V

IN the manuscript room of the British Museum the hours had dragged with hot, heavy footsteps. Aspasia, bending over a crabbed text, had seemed the only cool thing in the place; but as four o'clock drew near, she, too, felt the feverish touch of the afternoon. Her cheeks flushed, lending her a strange, unnatural charm, and the effort of writing became unbearable. Her hand wearied of the transcription; the fair Greek characters grew almost illegible, and at last she flung down her pen.

"Hang Hardiman!" she muttered, "but he can't have the whole thing tonight; it's too much—nigger driver!"

She sat for a little while resting her chin on her hands and stared at a sickly Bloomsbury tree outside.

"I wonder," she thought, "which of us is more wretched, I, or the silly old tree? At any rate, it gets what breeze there is in this oven of a London. Oh, why should I have to work? I want fresh air, new places, new people continually—new people—the old ones wear out so soon, except perhaps one. Oh, I am so bored!"

Her face drooped until it became abject almost to plainness. A mirror would have saved her, but the trustees in their infinite wisdom provide none on their otherwise perfect desks. Nothing could stay the *débâcle*, and at last she let her head fall in her arms and cried softly.

Presently she looked up and saw that she had drawn the sympathetic eyeglasses of a pedantic-looking young

man with a ludicrous nose who was working at the next desk. Anger did what a mirror might have wrought. That such an unlovely being should have dared to interest himself in her was too much. In a moment she had crushed both her emotion and the youth, who thrust his confused nose into his books again and cursed the hour of his birth. Aspasia's beauty revived like a flower magically restored to freshness. Dry-eyed and terribly serene, she rose and swept out of the room, while her neighbor began a sonnet entitled "Niobe Redux," only to stick hopelessly for a rhyme at the third line.

Going to the telegram board in the hall, she searched it with a quick glance and plucked out an envelope.

"Dear person," she murmured as she read the message, "of course I will. Hardiman may rip. I shall require quite three hours to rest and dress. It is a crime not to be beautiful for Maurice."

She went back to the manuscript room, gave up her papers and fled from the Museum. As she crossed the vestibule, country cousins turned to stare at her.

Before the milkmaid had ceased to moralize on brazen hussies, Aspasia was in Hardiman's study in Gower Street. The savant, an exquisite of the younger Oxford type, looked at her through gold-rimmed eyeglasses with a distant interest and held out a daintily manicured hand for the manuscript the girl carried.

"So soon, Miss Herrick?" he said with a slight drawl; "you are a miracle."

"I'm sorry it's not quite finished—the place was fearfully stuffy—I knew I'd get a headache and be useless tomorrow if I stayed longer—"

"Quite wise of you; it really doesn't matter. I can't even touch this today. I've found a fearful crux in one passage, and I fear I must consult the only man in England who can help me. We quarrel horribly about work, but I've no choice. Would you mind before you go just writing a tiny note to him?"

Aspasia sat down at an escritoire, a perfect Louis Seize piece, on which one or two ravishing Tanagra figures guarded the inkstand.

"Dear Robert," Hardiman began, and then he dictated a request for an early meeting—"in town, or if you like I'll run down to your place. Of course we sha'n't agree, but we may keep off fighting long enough to let daylight into the affair, if not into each other. Pardon my not writing this myself, but I've got a frightful cramp and can hardly read my own notes just now."

He turned abruptly to his work and seemed to have forgotten Miss Herrick's existence.

"Are you 'Yours ever' or simply 'Yours'?"

"Just put 'Salutations'; I'll sign it."

"You haven't told me the address."

"To Akenside—Robert Akenside."

"The man who edited 'Pausanias'?"

She paused with her pen above the envelope.

"Yes." Again Hardiman became oblivious.

"And the address?"

"Amiel College—no, no—that's ancient history. I wonder, can I remember? He threw up his fellowship at Amiel and took a cottage somewhere on the river—Pangbury, I think it was—a pretty place halfway between the station and the river. Ah, Croft an Righ, Gaelic for 'The Queen's Croft,' I believe, at Pangbury. He grows roses out there—he glanced at Aspasia with more interest—"wonderful roses," he repeated absently as a sudden color flamed across her cheeks. "He has a talent for growing roses."

She scribbled the address with a curious air of flurry, and refusing Hardiman's offer of tea she tossed the letter into the post basket and said good night.

The student murmured something about hoping her headache would be gone tomorrow, but the words were spoken only to the four walls.

Her cheeks were still aflame as she hurried back to her room. "Not a pretty name," she murmured; "he should have known better. He has no right to intrude, and tonight especially."

He had his hour, as Fate willed, and I was graciously pleased to be amused. Tonight it is different. I meant to have forgotten. He is very obvious to come back so soon and to shake off his disguise. I scarcely thought he could be so crude, and the coincidence is disheartening, quite like the cheaper fiction. I feel like a house maid, and Maurice will see it. He'll find me morally chapped unless I can heal myself with spiritual cosmetics before dinner time." She went upstairs rather wearily, and tonight the mysteries were more elaborate than ever.

A swift cab whirled Aspasia westward in the gloaming. She leaned back satisfied with what her mirror had said of her artistry. An hour's rest, her bath, the long drawn luxury of dressing at perfect leisure had cleared the weariness and agitation of the afternoon. Aspasia the bondwoman had given place to Aspasia the princess, who reigned by divine right of intellect and a fastidious capacity for enjoyment. The great lamps of the Alameda, as the cab stopped under them, showed a woman very calm and very pure-eyed, alert but detached, troubled about nothing past or to come, content merely with the living moment. So it were good, she cared not if she died the next.

Laleham helped her to alight, overpaid the driver and followed his guest within. She liked sometimes to enter a restaurant very slowly, to enjoy the effect she created. She was perfectly frank about this vanity, as she was about everything, and Laleham, leading the way to the table he had engaged, caught something of the girl's pose. In people with a duller sense of humor or of less appearance, it would have been ridiculous, but they carried the little comedy through with *élan* and found their reward in the envious and reproving eyes they drew.

"I'm sure we look very distinguished," Aspasia said as she sat down; "quite the most distinguished people here."

"But the poorest, certainly."

"Yes, isn't this very extravagant, Maurice? The Carlovigian and now—this—"

"You talk like a wife."

"Is this experience?"

"No, only base rumor, believe me."

"Baseless rumor, more likely. I never believe what married people say about each other; the truth is so dull, that they can only invent duller lies. Did you ever meet any married people who weren't intellectually dead?"

"Yes, once; only they weren't married, properly."

"Improperly?"

"Quite fascinatingly improperly. You see, they were really married, only not to each other."

"How careless of them; but how ingenious!"

"The most careless things are generally the most ingenious. You, *par exemple*, are the most beautifully careless woman I know."

"I don't know that I want to be thought ingenious. It's like comparing me to a spinning jenny. I toil not—or as little as possible; neither do I spin."

"Yet even the Queen of Sheba in all her glory was not arrayed in mind or body like—" Laleham paused and let his eyes say the rest.

"Thank goodness! The Queen of Sheba had the mind of an examiner, and I'm sure her frocks must have been dowdy. Of course the Jewish court chroniclers were journalists enough to say she was smart. One must flatter a visiting sovereign."

"It's not always safe!"

"Always for the journalist; seldom for the artist."

"But he may be an artist in flattery."

"You, Maurice, have scarcely been that tonight. I hope your skill isn't dying; you should never have materialized into words. I feel I must have failed somehow. There must be traces—I had a horrid afternoon. First the beastly work in that Museum; then someone I thought I rather liked disappointed me, broke what seemed a quite charming reserve in the crudest way, and all without actually doing anything himself, poor dear. He doesn't even know his crime; in fact he never really committed it; yet there it is. How

terrible that when one has got a hold even ever so slight upon another's soul, one may even when far away, quite out of that other's life, indeed, do vital things, things that hurt, that offend, that sear, through some accident of environment! It comes of having two lives, our own and the life we live in others' minds. Why can't we merely touch the moment, enjoy it and have done with it? Why should the moment be eternal? If life itself is but an instant that passes utterly, why shouldn't its own infinitely tiny moments leave as little trace? We are always suffering for our past, or another's past. Does it mean we are to suffer for the whole of life and others' life when that is past too? Is there no escape from the burden of consciousness?" She leaned forward, her face drawn and pinched, and taking a rose from a vase, tore it to pieces with nervous fingers.

Laleham looked at her with understanding eyes, and for a little he said nothing. Then very quietly in his golden voice he murmured:

"Ah, love, could thou and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire..."

"You know what the Persian says?"

"Yes, yes," she answered, "but we can't

'shatter it to bits and then
Remold it nearer to the heart's desire.'

It's we who are shattered, and the heart's desire is no nearer."

Laleham laid a hand lightly on Aspasia's.

"Take your own counsel tonight, dear; believe only in the moment and forget the ultimate burden of consciousness.

'From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives forever,
That dead men rise up never,
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.'"

Aspasia listened with a rising tide of emotion. Something like a sob, though it was tearless, escaped her, and in her eyes hope was born even of hopelessness. She laughed with the

laugh of a forgiven child. Laleham felt her spirit leap towards him.

"Ah," she cried in an exquisite veiled voice, "there's comfort in that, at any rate. Thank you, Maurice; it's the happiest grace after meat I've ever heard. Did I ever tell you of the awful grace before meat that Sam Taylor once said?—'For circumstances over which we have no control make us truly thankful.' Yours and his are really not unlike." She laughed again, this time a little wildly, a little defiantly.

"Aspasia, you're overworked. Let us leave introspection for tonight and go to see something quite foolishly objective—at one of the halls for choice?"

"No, let us talk or be silent, as we will. There is a quiet corner out there in the hall. Even the quietest theater would stun me tonight."

She led the way to a seat screened by some palms, let herself relax in weary undulations upon the cushions and held out two fingers for a cigarette.

Laleham looked at her with an uncertain flicker in his eyes. He checked what he would have said, and there was a long silence.

At last he said quietly: "Aspasia, I'm going abroad."

She did not look up.

"The picture," she murmured, "must have sold beyond expectation."

"In a way, yes. It has brought me a roving commission. For two years I shall go where I please, paint as and what I please. The man understands art and artists. If I do anything, he will be satisfied; if I do nothing, he will understand. He has been very generous. There will be enough for two."

Aspasia listened with heightening color, and her breath came quicker. But she made no answer.

"Such fortune," Laleham went on, "makes one dream of the unattainable; makes one ask if it be unattainable. You alone, dearest, can tell me whether it is really unattainable."

He took her hand, but she drew it away impatiently.

"I mean," he continued, in a soft, musing voice, as if speaking to himself

rather than to her, "to go first to Italy—a long rest in some quiet little town by the sea far away from the vulgar tread of the tourist. Then to the cities, when I feel that I can bear the faces of men and women and the pagantry of dead princes and dead poets, dead priests, dead artists whose handiwork is immortal. I have many friends in Rome, in Florence, in Venice; there will be new people continually, and over all the Italian sky. Then, perhaps, work may be possible, or if not, I hardly care; there is always life, many-colored, strong, palpitating as it can only be in the South. For a little time the sordid need of earning can be forgotten. What the hour may bring, I shall accept gladly, content if I can realize myself fully, completely, passing from sensation to sensation as naturally and unconsciously as my breath comes and goes."

Aspasia's head sank lower on her breast; her hands fell listlessly; only her bosom in its quick rise and fall betrayed her. Laleham's dream had been hers also, but his was to come true, while hers was no nearer than it had been during the stifling hours that afternoon in the Museum. What had been vague in her longing Laleham had molded into clear form. He understood; he could make such an interlude all that he said and more; yet she knew it would be no more than an interlude. Her head always traveled faster than her heart. She saw the joy, but beyond it the barriers the very act of enjoyment would have raised up between her and many things she could not spare from her life. She would need to care very much for him, if she were to accept this at his hands, and she felt that she did not care enough. Yesterday, perhaps, she might have answered otherwise. Tonight she knew that surrender had become impossible. She searched for a reason, but found none that she would dare to acknowledge.

There was another long silence. Laleham, looking up, saw that Aspasia's eyes were misty with unshed tears.

"Let us go, Maurice," she said at

last. "I am tired, and tomorrow's work is threatening."

"It is an outrage that you should work at all!" he exclaimed. "Your work is simply to be beautiful and to see and know only beautiful things."

"The unattainable," she laughed back, rallying her humor, her staunchest ally against overmuch feeling.

In the hansom they talked at random, but Laleham was aware of a curious disquietude in his companion.

As she alighted he kept her hand in his for a moment.

"And the unattainable?" he questioned slowly. "You have given me no answer."

"No, Maurice," she replied, and her voice was very low, very even. "No, I have discovered that I am a conventional person. Good night."

VI

JUST about the time when Aspasia was leaving the Museum, Marie Basing and Olivia Hope, alone in the smoking room of the Artemisia Club, were enjoying tea, cigarettes and the communion of soul with soul. Marie, lying in a low basket chair, was sending smoke rings to the ceiling with a dexterity that drove Olivia, who watched her from the hearth rug, to mild despair.

"I shall never make them," she cried petulantly, tossing away the end of her cigarette and lighting another. "I wonder if Aspasia will come along tonight as she promised."

"I think not. The new man will intervene. What did you think of him, Marie?"

"He seemed rather dull. Balliol-esque, I thought, and quite evidently a don, with possibilities perhaps, but awfully out of date. I tried him with Mallarmé, and I thought he looked scared. He's only moderately well read. Now and then he was quite nice, but he can't last. One never knows what will attract Aspasia, and perhaps she finds an occasional antediluvian a poignant change. Of course she hadn't known

him five minutes. But she usually dines with the most recent man within twenty-four hours. I wonder where she met him?"

"It's against the rules to wonder, isn't it?"

"Bother rules! When we're alone they don't exist. Even Sam Taylor doesn't talk Johnsonese when he's alone with you, does he?"

Olivia made a grimace. "Thank goodness, no," she said; "it would be too boring. Any pose requires more than an audience of one, unless the one is a fool. Do you know, I think Aspasia is caught at last. I am sure this is the most serious affair we have seen. What is more, Maurice thinks so too. He was almost rude last night; as rude, that is, as his manners allowed."

"Nonsense! Maurice fear that pedant?"

"That pedant is a very dangerous person, and not such a pedant, either. With the crowd of us he was at a disadvantage, I believe, but did you watch them during supper? I could see them very well now and then. He and Aspasia weren't boring each other in the least. She was tremendously interested."

"She always is for the first hour or two."

"Not with men who don't count, in some way. Believe me, Marie, this person does count, somehow. His culture may not be ours, but it's culture all the same and perhaps less superficial. And he doesn't lack soul, either. Did you watch him when Sam was playing? Afterwards he and Dr. Johnson talked of music for a little. Sam says he was perfectly wonderful. Such knowledge and appreciation! You know there's a breadth and soundness—don't laugh!—about those real scholars that our little cliquey devotions and prejudices can't give us. We laugh at Matthew Arnold and all he stands for; we roll our eyes and make our prettiest mouths and say 'Dreadful person' when he's mentioned. It puts the timid or shallow people down at once and we have it all our own way, but Aspasia's Motorman would just smile and pass it

by, secure on his own serene heights. We acknowledge one or two prophets and they are our gods. These men see all that's good in the prophets' work; they also know exactly what's wrong with it. We don't, and that's what's wrong with us. We know lots of little masters as one knows people in society. Motorman, I am sure, knows the few great masters like old friends, and understands exactly where the little masters come in. We pray to the Greek spirit and the Greek ideal at second hand, scarcely knowing Alpha from Beta. Last night one of us said something about Hellenism in our usual cocksure way. I saw Mr. Motorman's eyelid quiver."

"But Aspasia knows Greek awfully well."

"Yes, and she never babbles Hellenism as some of us do. She drapes our *peploi* correctly when we go to dances and is awfully sweet, but sometimes I've seen her look at us as Motorman did last night. Of course she's very much with us, and of us, fearfully modern and all that; but behind it I feel she has more of reality, more of the things Motorman understands, than any of us. She may pretend to sit on him for a foggy and a fossil, but he's got what she respects, what she worships. If only he's wise enough to keep the upper hand, he'll win. Oh, yes, he's dangerous, and his early gray hair makes him quite interesting, for, after all, we must have the externals right, or we shouldn't be the quivering intelligences we are, quite the cleverest set in London—but—"

"Livy, what ails you? You're treasonable, almost vindictive. What have the Polite Outcasts done to you?"

"Nothing—except train me past themselves. I can't explain it. Only I know you are going to expel Sam and me soon for the unpardonable sin, and somehow the spell of the coterie has loosened. It seems as if we all pose too much. I fear I am reverting to my original middle class, where I believe I shall be very happy with Sam to play me Liszt and Beethoven; perhaps with babies, less divinely harmonious—"

"Olivia, this is merely disgusting and utterly inartistic. The sooner you and Sam make an end in a registry office the better for us all. I shall leave the room. It only proves the deplorable effect the mere prospect of marriage has upon middleclass minds."

VII

MORNING found Akenside resolved to go abroad. He had rested ill; the old man within him had been calling the new a fool, and it seemed that the old was winning. At forty ambition was still alive and claimant, for it had been fed with solid success. Your failure at forty may still dream of great things to be done, but the springs of action are snapped. The great things are all of the morrow, never of today. And so life drifts past, until one sunset surprises him with the knowledge that the only thing left for him to do tomorrow is to die.

For years Akenside had permitted no hindrance to his work. The visions of yesterday, ineffably sweet though they were, had meant wasted hours. The old habit of concentration had become a conscience, and its rebuke irked him. With the dawn he rose and went down to the river for a swim, returning calm and clear-eyed to his study before the stroke of five. He had always known that there were two Robert Akensides, and the one watched the antics of the other with infinite amusement. This morning the one smiled when he saw the other avoid the rose-hung porch and steal out by a side gate further along the road. The self that noted the evasion yielded the other a mild applause. It was curious that it should understand the reason for the sacrifice. There were moments when the two bewildered what was possibly a third by their inextricable complexity.

Three hours' work restored his self-respect and the continuity of long years of quiet toil. At eight he went back to his room and flung some things together for his journey. He breakfasted

with an appetite, and faced his housekeeper serenely when she hinted that his disappearance had cost her acute distress of mind and body. In Mrs. Applejohn's philosophy the two were inseparable, and the mental turmoil was usually expressed in what she described as "spazzums." Such upsets, she hinted, were not for a person of her years.

Very sympathetically Akenside handed his housekeeper the key of his tandalus. The old lady curtsied, and waddled out to the gate to meet the postman.

When Mrs. Applejohn brought in the morning's letters, she pointed to one that lay on the top of the pile.

"Posty said I'd better show it to you, sir, tho' I said it wasn't to nobody here."

A strange contraction knit Akenside's brow when he glanced at the address. "Thanks. All right. I'll see about it, Mrs. Applejohn. Some mistake," he said in a queer constrained voice.

"Shall I call the postman back, sir?"

"No, don't trouble; let it lie. That'll do, Mrs. Applejohn."

His tone was peremptory. The duenna vanished with what speed her girth and infirmities permitted and retired to her own domain to marvel what had come to master. Akenside, the unopened letter in his hand, sat staring at the address.

"Impertinent," he growled and flung the envelope into the empty fireplace. He pushed away his plate savagely and went to the window, but the sight of the roses on the porch sent him back fuming. He stopped before a small bookcase, and without thinking what he did pulled out a volume. Still abstracted, he opened it at random, and was assailed by Sappho's "Ode to Aphrodite." His humor prevailed. Laughing, he fished the letter out of the grate and read once more in the odd, fascinating handwriting:

ROBERT MOTORMAN, ESQ.,
Croft an Righ,
Pangbury.

He opened the packet and looked at the signature. "Hardiman!" he ex-

claimed, and ran through the letter feverishly. He laid it down with a faint sigh of disappointment, and sat thinking for a moment or two. Then he scribbled a telegram and bade the housekeeper send it off.

"And, Mrs. Applejohn," he said, "lunch for two, please; I expect someone."

"Very good, sir. Will it be a lady or a gentleman, sir?"

"It's Mr. Hardiman. I'm going out for the morning. If he should by any chance come before I return, say I'll be in at one exactly. He can scarcely arrive before that."

When Akenside returned, punctually at one o'clock, Mrs. Applejohn met him with the air of one who has something to conceal. Her master thought also that he read reproach in her eye. A clean conscience, however, stood between him and understanding.

He asked casually whether Hardiman had come.

Mrs. Applejohn, with a curious emphasis on the pronoun, said, "No, 'e 'as not, but there is this telegram."

"Where?" he asked abruptly when he had read the message.

"In the study, sir," Mrs. Applejohn replied with the air of a martyr. "Shall I serve lunch at once, sir?"

"Of course. No, wait till I ring." He broke away impatiently and ran up to his room.

In five minutes he reappeared looking very cool and almost youthful in a charming suit of gray tweed.

At the study door he stopped and read the telegram again. "It is business, pure business," he murmured, and vowing that business it was to be, he went in.

They shook hands almost casually.

"Mr. Hardiman is so sorry he couldn't come down; one of his awful headaches. He asked me if I'd explain what he wanted." She looked up with the frank gaze of a child and Akenside permitted himself a long look.

There was here nothing of the siren of two nights ago. The plain white blouse and dark skirt were almost aggressive in their severity. The hat was perhaps

too large for the fashion of the moment. There, if anywhere, was some reminiscence of the bizarre note, but only one who had seen Aspasia in rebellion could interpret the *nuance* of the style. Her hair, too, no longer framed her face in broad braids. There was nothing, absolutely nothing, with which the most conventional employer could have found fault. Yesterday in the Museum she was nearer her own free self, to the scandal of the rustic and feminine moralist. Today, when Hardiman asked her to run down to Pangbury, she had hurried back to her room, there to turn herself into a person, as she told herself, of demure virtue, a good little thing, willing to do her duty. "Damn duty!" she had added with her wickedest flash—"and conventional persons, like the girl who said good-bye to Maurice only last night." The pose pleased her, supported her even. She would not admit how much she needed support. She had come to this meeting with a strange curiosity that was almost dread, but Akenside's easy unconcern, his masterly ignoring of that chapter of their life, so recent yet so remote, gave her confidence. Here she was Hardiman's messenger and nothing more. She took up the rôle gallantly, and would have plunged into business at once, but Akenside stopped her with a whimsical gesture.

"Not until we've had lunch, please," he pleaded. He rang the bell, and made conversation quite deftly for a minute or two until Mrs. Applejohn, a pattern of forced discretion, announced that the meal was served.

Their meeting was that of two well-bred people whom chance had thrown together for business. Akenside, with something of an apology for shop, spoke of Hardiman and the work he had in hand, and remarked casually that he himself was just leaving for Crete.

"You make one very envious," Aspasia said. "To see Knossos," she added almost to herself, "would be a realization of 'La Citta Morta.'"

Akenside shrugged his shoulders. "I confess I find myself a little too old-fashioned for D'Annunzio." He looked at

her rather anxiously as he spoke, almost expecting that the siren of the Carlovigian would rise at him with "antediluvian." "Yes," he repeated aggressively, seeing that she kept silence, "too old-fashioned."

"Surely not," the girl returned quietly. "Of course there may be, must be, a strain of newer thought, but do you not feel that the play has all the pathos of an 'Antigone' translated into a moment of our life? Does it not make the ancient and the modern one? Is not the emotion that often seems too impossible and remote in the Greek dramatists here made vital for us? It's impossible to express quite what 'La Citta Morta' makes me feel, but you understand, you understand"—she waved her hands with a bewitching un-English gesture, half despairing, half deprecating—"I *know* you understand."

"Know?" he queried with gentle malice, allowing himself the hint of an allusion.

She understood and blushed. But she carried it off bravely.

"Yes; why not? There are more difficult things to know than that."

"I had forgotten how obvious I am."

"Are you obvious?" she asked distantly, and the moment's approach to intimacy was added to the sum of lost possibilities.

Commonplaces reigned till lunch was over. Akenside ordered coffee to be served in the garden.

"It is too perfect a day to stay indoors," he said. "We can talk business quite as well outside. Come and look at my roses."

As they went down to a little arbor, he plucked a choice bloom here and there, flinging them together with the caressing skill of one who loves flowers for themselves.

"These are yours," he said, as they sat down beside the rustic table. "They may seem sweeter in town than they do here."

She took the roses eagerly and bent her face over them.

"Yes, they will seem sweeter in town." Then for a moment she let them rest on

the table before her. But the next, she gathered them up and fastened them in her belt, so naturally and unconsciously that only Mrs. Applejohn could have accused her of coquetry.

That sore tried Abigail, indeed, seeing the roses as she served the coffee, had thoughts too deep for tears, and hastened away, finding but scant comfort in the proverb of the one incomparable, because aged, fool.

"But I must really give you Mr. Hardiman's message," Aspasia said at last, after a long silence.

"It is a wonderful afternoon," he replied. "Do you think it's too warm for a walk? We can talk Hardiman and his troubles as we go."

"*Solvitur ambulando*," she laughed back; "that will be charming. It's sweet of you to propose it, for I hate indoors in the country."

Under the rose burdened porch of many memories they went out, two curiously acute people minutely observant of each other, with that infinite sensitiveness to mood and phrase which is the penalty of one refinement of culture. She, on her part, was curious to see the pedant on his hobby in full career, although she dreaded and knew she would detest the sight. She would wait, however, until he said the first word. He, on his part, was absorbed only in the study of the girl at his side. Every moment among the woods and fields seemed to lift her further and further away from the siren of the Carlovigian. She had grown gentle, almost demure; the stabbing cynicism flew seldom, although her wit was no less keen. It seemed as if she had never been other than a child, clever to distraction, perhaps, but above all things adorable.

Still, this harmony with rusticity might be only the last and most studied pose. He would do well to walk warily, and he could not altogether forget that unaccountable envelope. Unaccountable it was, for whatever Aspasia might be—and what she was heaven only knew!—it was impossible to imagine her devising a coarse pleasantry. As he pondered, some hint of a solution

flattered him, and he was not reluctant to lay the unction to his soul.

The girl, light-footed as a fawn, kept easy pace with Akenside's swinging strides. They struck a long meadow path so pleasant in its alternation of sun and shade that neither man nor maiden noted the lengthening miles and the westering sun. A quaint country inn beguiled them to stop for tea. Aspasia confessed to a healthy appetite and proved it, declaring herself at the end of the meal fit for twenty leagues.

Seven o'clock found them in a little valley where fields bordered on the east by hedgerows sloped downward to a thin stream, already shot with golden lances. Westward beyond the brook rose wooded heights, where a nestling farmhouse sent up a hospitable column of smoke into the windless air. It was one of those unclouded evenings, when under slanting rays the landscape seems alive with vibrant motion. The eye seems to feel the flooding outflow of the light from its source and the eternal dance of its ultimate particles, swirling as the motes swirl in the sun-beam. And yet this sense of flux and transience had no power to disturb the perfect peace of the scene.

By unspoken consent they rested for a little on the brow of the slope. Aspasia, with a long sigh of contentment, flung herself down on the grass at a discreet distance from Akenside. Upon them had fallen a long silence which neither cared to break, but to Robert the moment and the sight of his companion sufficed.

The report of a gun, far off among the woods, recalled them to each other.

Aspasia sprang to her feet. "We really ought to turn back," she said. "How far have we come?"

"Too far to get back before dark. But there's a station quite near. We'll run along to Pangbury in the train. You will stay and dine with me."

"Thank you, no. I ought really to go on."

"Why hurry?"

But she was firm.

"Come, then," he said, looking at his watch, "there's no time to lose."

Half an hour later he alighted at Pangbury. As he waved good-bye to Aspasia he cried: "Tell Hardiman I'll write him about that—"

He paused—and stared blankly at the retreating train—he would write to Hardiman about what? Obviously, not about that most delicious afternoon when Hardiman and his scholarly difficulties had been utterly forgotten.

He hurried back to the cottage, devising a thousand schemes. Just in time to catch the last post, Akenside wrote to Hardiman, saying that the matter in hand had taken longer than he had expected and that there were still some points which Miss Herrick had not had time to explain. Might she come down again tomorrow? But at the post box he paused, when the letter had all but left his hand.

"No," he reflected, "if I know her at all, she'll find the way out of this. Any message from me will embarrass her. Besides, if it's one of the real Hardiman headaches I remember, he won't be able to see anyone for two days."

So he went home, smoked his cigar under the roses, and turned in betimes to sleep the sleep of the unjust whose dreams ought to be evil. But dreams know no "must" or "ought."

They were gipsying in a luxurious motor caravan; he had shot a hare, and she was cooking it in a tripod kettle of exquisite classical shape, while she chanted stanzas that out-Sapphoed Sappho. Her sleeves were rolled up; her arms—oh, Hera, her arms! The sunset was perfect, intense, too intense for a sunset. This was no waning light. It grew garish—blinding even. . . .

Mrs. Applejohn had drawn the curtains and was standing at the bedside with a cup of tea and his letters.

He turned over the pile hastily. Yes, there it was; he held it impatiently while Mrs. Applejohn left the room.

Oh, the incomparable Aspasia! How delightfully she had put the case; how difficult only the expert could realize! And how perfect the Greek characters

in the quotations! Yes, of course, he understood; Hardiman must be an ass not to see; but then it *was* a crux and he was rather glad Hardiman had not seen. He would rather score, for his rival, of scrupulous honesty even when the pill was bitter, would say in his note: "As my friend Mr. Akenside had pointed out, this terra cotta is certainly not a portrait of Ptolemy, but merely a Hermes—"

He read to the end enraptured. But stay; there must be a postscript. He turned the letter over. There on the last page: "If there is anything I have not made quite clear, I'll be at the Museum till eleven."

He turned back to the beginning and read the letter again. It was all quite clear. She was inconsiderate to be so impeccably lucid.

There was nothing to be done but to write to Hardiman; better still, to see him. He was scarcely likely to be visible, but it was worth trying at least. At any rate, it would show interest to call. He wondered whether he had not rather shamefully neglected Hardiman of late. Questions of work apart, they had been quite good friends at Amiel, as rival dons go. The fellow might be a fop, personal and intellectual, but he had his good qualities. Undeniably he was a fop, rather an egregious one.

Anyway, he ought to be getting up. The deuce! It was half-past nine! How he had overslept himself, and that preposterous Mrs. Applejohn had not thought it worth while to warn him. She was growing too motherly altogether. He tore through his toilet, and before breakfast he sent for William Griggs, the young man who looked after the car and occasionally drove. He would not drive himself this morning; it would be too reminiscent of other things.

At ten they were ready to start, and William admitted that they might see the British Museum within the hour, "barrin' accidents."

But it was half-past eleven when they reached the Museum.

In the reading room Akenside, too

apparently eager for his own good, hurried from desk to desk. During his drive he had discovered, he felt certain, an obscurity in Aspasia's letter. As he searched the room, he pulled himself together enough to put the case intelligently.

But his ingenuity was wasted. A second time he traversed every alley in the vast rotunda in vain. His search of the manuscript room and the main room was also fruitless.

"William Griggs," he said severely, "your intentions were excellent. That's why they're such damnable failures," he added as he alighted at Hardiman's door.

"Shall I wait for you, sir?"

"No; go to the garage, William, or," he added gently, "to the devil."

And William, sphinx-like, brought the car round and drove off.

An hour before Akenside had reached the Museum Aspasia was alone in Hardiman's study. The great man was still a prisoner in his room, but he had sent a half-illegible scrawl asking for things he wanted done. The girl sat down at the same table where she had written the letter to Akenside and began to decipher Hardiman's hieroglyphics. But her thoughts wandered, and she dreamed a little of yesterday. She had promised to be at the Museum till eleven. It would be amusing to see what might happen there. . . .

She rose to go, when some impressions of writing—her own—on the otherwise clean blotting pad caught her eye. But surely that word in the address was curious. Could it look so in reverse? If not that, what was it then? At her belt hung a tiny mirror set in antique silver. She took it up and held it over the paper.

The word started into legibility and she flushed angrily. The fatuity of it, the betrayal—betrayal of—nothing at all. Was she, then, after all, a mere middleclass sentimentalist, ready to lose her head on the slightest, such very slight, provocation? She had believed that nothing of that sort could disturb her aplomb. And this was mere driveling.

ing. He had really behaved rather well. Not, of course, otherwise than a decent person would—small credit to him—but it looked like encouragement, and so many men would be fools when they thought they had the ball at their feet.

She reviewed the whole of yesterday. No, not once had he presumed upon her wretched slip. But then he was so horribly immaculate—such a prig. He would be conscious all the time that he was avoiding temptation and would admire himself for it. Anyhow, this ended it. The interlude had been pleasant enough; it had even held possibilities, but—

She was used to hearing the door of circumstance slam, and she had schooled herself never to waste regret on the thing that might be behind it. She might be angry; she was angry at first that she had made that blunder in the address; she was angry that she had spent even one night regretting that she had not accepted Laleham; but this regretting of regrets was endless. It was like the picture of a cocoa tin and its label on the picture of a cocoa tin on the label of a cocoa tin: one could never tell where it stopped. There was no possible cure but to put the teasing interlude out of one's thoughts and to believe it had gone out of one's life. It was nonsense that the past had any vitality. If people were weak and sentimental, then it might; but she believed it could be killed by mere strong-minded disregard, and in that belief she went forward, through a tract of dreariness perhaps, that was often almost intolerable, to the next sensation that counted. They seemed to grow fewer and fewer.

VIII

MR. HARDIMAN, prostrate in a darkened room, told his man that he was well enough to receive Mr. Akenside. The doctor had forbidden visitors, but the scholar was worried about Akenside's reply to his question, and he

wanted to know the worst or the best at once.

The rivals met with that perfect fusion of friendship and professional enmity in scholarship which Oxford teaches better than anything else. It is found to some extent among men of science, but their vehicle of expression is more limited, less flexible and less polished. Among unacademic literary people and artists it does not exist at all. Their phrasing is often more fastidious, their sensitiveness and tact far greater, but they either love or hate in extremes. The golden mean, the exquisite balance of the bitter and the sweet, remains with the Hardimans and the Akensides of this world. It is of their own world, the Senior Common Room. The intense poets and playwrights of the inner literary movement in London will have none of it. To them "pedants" are anathema; on them the pedants aforesaid smile with amused superiority. Both are intolerant of what they call the other's ignorance. The pedant—God help him!—with his long vista of the world's knowledge, his Attic salt and his Attic serenity, sees things in a truer perspective. He cannot bow the knee to an affection of Hellenism that rests on second-hand knowledge of the more decadent passages of the Anthology. The intense poet and playwright, darling of the smaller dramatic societies, rails at the pedant as a being barren of emotion, untouched by the beauty of modernity.

When the two schools encounter, as they had for Akenside during these strange, distracting days, victory remains with neither. For the present, in Hardiman's company, he was content to forget that he had ever been shaken out of ancient habit, that he had heard the siren's song. There was still time to lash himself to the mast, and here, with Hardiman's smooth, pleasant voice flowing on in deft and beautifully ordered argument, with which he entirely disagreed, he saw a chance of refuge, perhaps of ultimate safety.

They fenced and parried for an hour,

and at last Hardiman owned himself almost beaten. In the thrill of victory Akenside believed that he had fought his way back to peace.

"You are very convincing, Robert," Hardiman sighed rather wearily; "still, I have one shot in reserve. Some days ago I had a transcription made of an unpublished MS. fragment in the Museum, which seems to support my case. You'll find it on my desk. Would you mind going down for it? Atkins will be ages in finding it, and he'll disarrange my papers. Besides, it's too dark here for you to read; and I can't bear to have the blinds drawn up."

"Well," Hardiman queried, with a faint note of triumph in his voice, when his friend returned, "are you still obstinate?"

"Yes. As the text stands, you seem to have a lot to say for yourself, but unfortunately for you your secretary has challenged the reading at the very crucial point, and suggests an emendation that I see no reason to dispute. It alters the sense entirely and quite floors you."

"Indeed! I must have missed seeing the note. My wretched head had begun to worry me when I looked over the transcription. Let me hear."

Akenside repeated the argument Aspasia had suggested, and added some words of his own that left Hardiman pensive.

"Yes," he conceded, "between you you've beaten me. It's a good point lost, but no matter. Fortune of war. The lady is very useful, although her cleverness is sometimes embarrassing. However, better to be exposed now than after I'd committed myself in print. You would have been very merciless, Robert, in the *Hellenic Journal*."

"If I had found you out. But, remember, you owe your final defeat to another. I only set opinion against opinion. I congratulate you on your ally, the traitress."

"*À propos*, Robert, my good or evil fortune might be yours if you cared. You'll be sorry to hear that I'm a con-

demned man. My doctor says this last attack must be taken seriously, and he's forbidden me to work for a year, at least. It's a great nuisance."

"I am so sorry. We were all looking forward to your 'Prolegomena to the Study of the Archaic in Greek Sculpture.'"

"To slate it? Behold how these archaeologists love one another."

"Well, slating would have been the least of the pleasures, and between friends, you know, it's mine today, thine tomorrow. I owe you some hard knocks, too, Arthur."

"You shall owe me something better soon. My idleness, of course, means that Miss Herrick must find something else to do. I don't need to recommend her. You have seen what she is. It would be very pleasant for me if I could tell her that she need not worry about another engagement. I'm not sentimental about business, and this has been a business affair, pure and simple. Still, she's served me well, even when she's made me look a fool, and I don't want to turn her adrift. What do you say?"

Akenside thanked his gods that the room was so dark. This, then, was the escape he had hoped to find in Hardiman's severely academic society! A strange wave of emotion surged over him. Visions of things possible and impossible danced through his brain; the siren's song rang louder and the lashings seemed all too frail to hold him to the mast. And this was the friend to whom he had looked to draw the knots secure! Hardiman was not sentimental about business, forsooth! But just to save himself a moment's unpleasantness he had done this. What interest had he in the girl?

"You are very good, Arthur. The lady seems rather capable. An enthusiast in classics, I suppose?"

"Scarcely, I think. I know very little about her, and haven't troubled to find out. What she knows she knows, and she's fearfully acute, as you have seen; but I'm sure she merely

uses her knowledge as a means to an end. It helps her to live in freedom. As for enthusiasm, she likes Sappho and Homer, I believe, and the tragedians, but I'm sure she despises us and our work. She's of the so-called artistic gang; and that's often useful where we touch ancient art. She's better than her *milieu* there, of course; for she really understands the Greek spirit as well as the language. She would be difficult, perhaps impossible, if one were fool enough to grow intimate with her; but we've kept the most correct distance, and the one or two tirades I've heard pronounced, very prettily pronounced, against pedantry, have been merely amusing interludes in a dull day."

"Do you know who she is?"

"I haven't a ghost of an idea. She came to me out of the *Ewigkeit* in answer to an advertisement."

"She had references, of course?"

"Amusing enough."

"Amusing?"

"Yes, I saw at once to what world she belonged, and I knew that she believed she was selling herself to the Philistines. I knew what to expect—for the girl's subtlety of mind and cleverness could not be hid. To be a scholar is in her eyes only a degree less despicable than to be a journalist, whom she considers the meanest of God's creatures. Evidently, then, she contrived to find the recommendations that would appeal most surely to the conventional mind. To the Philistines she sent me. It must have been hard for her to find the sponsors. In one case I was not surprised to get an answer from a British matron who said just what the British matron would about her complete confidence in Miss Herrick, whom she often invited to stay with her own daughters, and so on. The other was a very prettily worded note written in a ladylike hand by a gentleman who was then in a responsible financial post and who is now in prison for an unfortunate error in his accounts. That accident does not alter the value of his recommendation. The girl really was her own best credential.

I asked for the others only for form's sake. I read them, laughed and engaged her. After all, it was her brains I was concerned with, not her virtue; and the one was as obvious as the other. To me she has been merely a valuable machine. Any interest I may have taken in it has only been to keep it fit. I scarcely know what she looks like. Some people tell me she is very beautiful. Do you care to have her to help you?"

"You're awfully good, Hardiman, but up to now I've been very happy alone, and I can't decide in a moment." Akenside was calm again and his voice came steadily.

"Don't imagine, my dear man, that I want to jockey you into the affair. It merely occurred to me as a useful arrangement for everybody. There's no hurry; let me know in a few days what you think."

"I was just rushing off to Crete for a month or two when your letter came yesterday. Very likely I shall go tomorrow. That, I suppose, would mean a considerable interregnum for Miss Herrick, even if I were to take her. When do you go abroad?"

"In less than a fortnight, if I'm able. My work, of course, is at an end now, but I'll claim Miss Herrick until I go. She can be useful in lots of ways, although I'm an extinct volcano as far as the book goes. But I've no end of things to set in order before I leave town. Must you really go?"

"I must, really," Akenside replied, looking at his watch. "Your doctor had better not catch me here. Good-bye; get well soon."

The old sensible ritual of Oxford saved them the embarrassment of the handshake.

Akenside went away more perturbed than he had come. He was angry with Hardiman for his unconscious betrayal of himself to himself. As an individualist, as an intellectual hedonist, as one who had striven to make the best of the life he had chosen, he knew that the impulse of the hour must be resisted,

if he were not to wreck his happiness. The new situation Hardiman's proposal had created was worse ten thousand times than the earlier swift access of passion with its dreams of what old-fashioned people call the course of true love. Yesterday his thoughts had not gone beyond the ordinary forms of the matrimonial adventure, the certain wooing, the possible winning and then the equalor unequal yoke, as Fate might ordain. He had been too long a bachelor to like the idea whole-heartedly, but it had seemed the only way. His rigid scheme of life would not suffer him to think otherwise. Much as he disliked bondage, he could not see beyond it. Like the blind majority, he had mistaken the accidental for the essential. He had been the slave of the shibboleth "honorable intentions."

Today Hardiman's proposal had brought revolution. It had opened a path that would bring him many roses and few thorns. He need no longer be concerned about honor; that would take care of itself. The galling question of love and marriage fell into abeyance. Here would be association safeguarded by work. Here he would enjoy the mental stimulus, the charm of her presence, without care for the future. He would be as cold as Hardiman. He might suffer a little, but it would be worth while. There could be no danger to the woman. Hardiman had told him she was not to be won by such as they, and it explained many things that he had found difficult to understand.

And yet—and yet! He knew that he ought to cut her ruthlessly out of his life. She would soon find other work. Not so soon, perhaps; no, he had heard pitiful stories of struggle and privation, of defeat, of the last reckless expedient that brought a moment's meteoric triumph before oblivion. Bah! He was more sentimental than Hardiman. The only way was to let the girl take care of herself and go his own way. If he played Providence, it would mean disaster.

Yet he doubted his strength to resist playing Providence.

IX

THE P. L. M. had left the darkness of the Mont Cénis Tunnel and was beginning the long descent into Piedmont. Akenside, in the corner of a first class carriage, tried to be interested in scenes that used to fascinate him. But the half-deserted villages, hanging perilously on their rocky eyries, the glimpses of the receding Alps, the entrancing red roofs and medieval glamor of Susa far away to the left, the racing mountain streams, in which the broken masses of water so strangely suggested ice, no longer moved him to a schoolboy's desire to throw up his cap and cry, "This is Italy! Hurrah for Italy!" He wondered whether he was growing old. Well, the spell of mere landscape had passed; he would try how it was with other interests. He began to review the old puzzle about Hannibal's descent into Italy. Once he had come this way on foot, knapsack on back, hoping to solve the riddle, and for a time he thought he had succeeded. But when he challenged the world with his theory, Hardiman arose and smote him hip and thigh. There was always Hardiman, inopportune as Providence. No, the Hannibal enigma was a bore. It had brought the annoying intrusion of Hardiman, whom he wished to forget altogether; for with that too-wise man was bound up the memory of folly.

Akenside closed his eyes and let the memory of folly have its fling.

He had watched himself go the way he ought not, and the sight rather distressed him. He had played into the too-wise man's hands, and that learned, self-indulgent person had been absurdly grateful. The person most concerned had known better; for her that or any absurdity was impossible. He liked her utter frankness, although her letter of two lines had given him a slight, a very slight shock.

She had written:

Thank you very much. I did so want a good holiday. I hope you will stay away quite a long time.

JULIA HERRICK.

He thought in a moment of return to fogyism that the last remark was superfluous. On reflection, however, he took it in the spirit of the Carolingian, and fogyism fled yelping. What a delicious baggage of contradiction it was! A baggage—a baggage? The word was not nappy. When they met on Hardiman's business at Pangbury, not a breath of the Carolingian. Now in a letter that was purely business this little stinging stroke—across the face!

Ah, it was *his* business this time. That made all the difference. He had to be taught that if he thought himself ever so little of a Mæcenas he must be chastised for that error. A man of his stiff, antediluvian ways was suspect. He had not the careless give and take of Bohemia. But it was too bad to accuse him of the vulgarity of patronage. He had not even thought of it so; and yet to be conscious ever so faintly of doing what the world, disguising its cruelty, calls "a kindness"—was not that in itself vulgar? He must not imagine that he was of the least importance to her, except as a means to an end. The moment he wanted her help, he knew she would be ready with her part of the bargain; but he had given her the chance of idleness, and she cared not how long it lasted. Few women would have had the honesty to say so. It was of a piece with her imperious humor. He wondered whether it was the humor or the honesty that made the stroke endurable, if it were endurable.

He tried to forget the whole matter. For the present the girl should not exist for him. But there was no forgetting. Behind every other thought lay the vague pain of failure. Then the long sequence of thought began and the end was chaos.

When Akenside opened his eyes again he was surprised to find that his reverie had lasted for hours. Turin was not far away. They were down among the sun-baked villages now. Too well he knew the clouds of fine, white dust that lent the scorching afternoon another misery. He had intended to go to Rome without a break, but

mind and body alike cried out against another twelve hours' wayfaring. He would stay for the night at least in Turin.

He bathed and changed and after a meal that might have been a very late luncheon or an impossibly early dinner, he went out into the Corso Vittorio Emanuele and strolled down towards the river.

The lamp above the archway of a little *trattoria* on the lower terrace threw Akenside into high relief as he passed out upon the road. A figure rose from one of the tables outside the inn, a hand was laid on his arm and someone spoke his name. He turned and saw a tall, elderly man muffled in a cloak, his face shaded by a broad hat.

"Yes, I'm Akenside, but"—he stopped, for the voice, although not altogether strange, puzzled him—"you have the advantage of me."

The other stepped into the circle of light and raised his hat, showing a pale, acute face, brilliant blue eyes, and a pointed gray beard fastidiously trimmed. He held out a long, thin hand on which he wore a ring set with an antique gem.

"You don't know me," the stranger said in Italian; "perhaps you remember this." He laughed and touched the ring lightly.

"Even without Aristotelian signs," Akenside replied hypocritically, for the ring had served its turn, "I would know Professor Urbano."

They shook hands and the Professor, taking Akenside's arm, drew him to the table he had just left. "Come and have a glass of wine, and tell me what brings you here. How long is it since we met in Oxford? Ah, no, don't tell me. Old fellows like myself grow shy of counting the years."

"We do, alas!"

"We? Is Saul also among the prophets? In fifteen years it will be time enough for boys like you to say that."

"Alas! I'm a boy no longer," Akenside exclaimed.

"Nonsense, my dear fellow!" the Pro-

fessor cried. "This affectation of age in young men grows exasperating. We graybeards have little enough left, and you steal even that. In my day we kept our youth till the last moment; now you make haste to be old. At five-and-twenty you profess to have tried everything and to be utterly disillusioned. It gives you a pretty cue for sentimental self-pity and makes you 'interesting' to one set of women. When I was young we loved and hated frankly and heartily. The kiss was as ready as the blow. Nowadays you are all pose and introspection. You talk about the blow; you seldom get the kiss—very fine and subtle, no doubt, and you think us very crude and elementary persons. But I believe we have the best of it, after all. We acted where you talk and think and torment yourselves, and in the end, I believe, you do grow old too soon. Then the iron enters into your soul, for you find that your precious pose of age has become reality too soon. The honest old *viveur* who has laid the lighter life aside at the proper moment is richer than you. You remember what Sophocles said in old age when someone asked him if he could still love? 'Hush, if you please,' said the poet; 'I'm glad to say I've escaped from it, and I feel as if I'd got rid of a frantic and savage master.'"

"You're very fierce, Professor. As for me, I plead not guilty—of exhausting everything too soon. That side of experience I've left alone."

"So much the worse for you, then. The one extreme is as bad as the other. I don't take your plea of not guilty, for omission is as bad as commission. It comes to the same thing in the end. Here I catch you playing the old man before your time. It means only one thing: you're bitten with the plague of introspection like the rest. You ponder and refine and analyze and stretch yourselves on the rack of your own imagination, till you are a mere tangle of bleeding nerves."

The old scholar made the glasses jingle on the table as he laid down the

law. Suddenly he stopped, smiled, shrugged his shoulders, and twitching his mantle, cried: "Forgive me, Akenside, for my tirade. It's a strange greeting, but I'd been thinking a great deal about that phase of modernity just before I met you, and your presumption in leveling yourself up to us old fellows made me fierce. You with your best time still in your grasp! Too old at forty—bah! It's the invention of the school—not school—*crèche*—of sixteen-year-old English journalists. You see, I watch your great national movements here beyond the Alps."

"Your eyes are always in every place, Signor Urbano."

"Beholding the evil and the good, eh? But don't let us get profane. Another glass of this Capri?"

Akenside had been listening with a haunting sense of fear. For a moment after he met his old friend he had hugged himself with the idea that here was relief at last. Urbano would bring him the nepenthe he sought. But his first unlucky word had driven him back upon himself. The Professor's condemnation touched him poignantly, not so much for his own sake as for another's. It was the thought, the philosophy, if that were not too good a name, of *her* circle that Urbano had attacked. He remembered the talk of the company at the Carolingian, the strange, exotic flavor of its culture, its ultra-sensitiveness to mere words, its refinement upon refinement of expression that would at length make writing and speech impossible. And those young men, those old men, with all their experience behind them and no compensation in wisdom, only a faint and pungent subtlety too limited to be effective outside their own environment. For such the world had no use.

He looked at the brilliant old face opposite to him, and read in it the history of life seized and used generously up to the finest issues. In Urbano he saw the realization of the old philosophic tag, "the full and harmonious development of the faculties"—vile phrase, like all the jargon of the schools, but for the moment adequate. Urbano

stood for everything that was great in European scholarship. He had done more for the precious fragments of Sappho than any other living man, although his name was unknown to the ladies of the Carolingian, enthusiasts for the Lesbian poet. But he was no Dryasdust. He had made every intellectual interest his own; he was as well informed in art as in letters, and he made genius free of his purse. He helped where he saw help was needed, and he did not worry if the swan turned out a goose. He took the sporting chance with his protégés. If they did well, he never claimed to have discovered or made them. When he was disappointed, he let none suspect it, the goose least of all.

They sipped their Capri in silence for a little. Then Urbano rose, saying he must keep an appointment.

"Curiously enough, Akenside," he remarked as they left the hostelry, "I wrote to you only yesterday about a scheme of mine. Where are you going, north or south?"

"South; I'm on my way to Crete."

"Then I may see you in Rome. The season's impossibly late, but you'll stay with me for the few days I shall be there. When do you go on?"

"Tomorrow evening."

"So do I. Let us travel together. There is an excellent night express at eight o'clock. Tomorrow, unfortunately, I'm engaged all day, but we meet at the station. My road lies this way; you are crossing the river, I see. *Buona sera.*"

X

FREED from immediate drudgery and with part of the future secure, Aspasia was for the moment on rather good terms with Providence. True to her policy of *nil admirari*, she had received quite stoically the offer of a retaining fee that would keep her in comfort from the time she left Hardiman until Akenside should want her to begin work with him.

"What a Quixote the man is!" she

exclaimed when she read his letter. "But after all, why not?" Then she wrote the few lines of consent which wrecked Akenside's enjoyment of the descent into Italy.

The prospect of an idle holiday was very fair, if only Providence in its beneficent mood had not done things by halves. Maurice's absence was an unspeakable mistake. Nobody would have been quite so useful just now. Still, there were other excitements. Olivia and Sam Taylor were to be married at once; for Sam's last theatrical venture was actually filling the treasury. The wedding would amuse her for the moment. After that it would be curious to watch how long the two people could remain on speaking terms. But at the best, these were not great issues. She feared inevitable boredom.

Now Maurice always interested her. They might quarrel; they did quarrel often, but he always got the better of her in the end. He had a quiet persistency that wore her down at last. He was the only man in the world who could influence her thought. His was the only mind which she would suffer to dominate her own. Yet that stubbornness of his was a barrier. She feared that he would never come back to her. She was only one among many. Most of all she feared Marie Basing. Laleham had only to move his little finger to take her captive. Aspasia was always fatally sweet to Marie. She, who seldom troubled to oblige anybody, sometimes put herself out of the way to do Marie Basing favors which she knew she would hardly appreciate. Marie, the Englishwoman, thought herself very musical. Aspasia, with her strange strain of Middle European blood, knew exactly how unmusical Marie was, and sometimes sent her concert tickets which she was unable to use herself. It consoled her for her own loss to think how Marie would misunderstand the music. Such things lent zest to a barren day.

The first fortnight of holiday passed pleasantly enough.

Then Seward came.

It was at a little dinner in a Soho

restaurant. She was the guest of Olivia and Taylor, whose days of freedom were numbered. Olivia was happy enough, but Taylor seemed to have lost something of his gaiety. He was in a state of misgiving that comes to most men, except the very young, on the eve of marriage. It is a very hell of hells because it must be endured in silence. There should be a secret order of confessors for souls in such a crisis, for the friend does not exist to whom the doubting benedict-to-be would dare open his heart. To men like Taylor, who had known the real meaning of freedom, the agony is exquisite. Not even love itself brings anodyne for that hurt.

Taylor, however, had the trick of ready speech, and Olivia suspected nothing. Aspasia, the outsider, knew that something was amiss and she resented it. The whole duty of man who took her out to dinner was to amuse her. If he failed, she grew first querulous and then sullen almost to plainness. For a man who cared for her this was torture, torture she never scrupled to inflict. She had a devilish skill in putting people in the wrong, a skill equaled only by the deviltry of her charm. If the man persisted in failure she announced that she was bored, and the evening ended sometimes in silence, sometimes in disaster. Fortunately Taylor was proof against the worst torment, but he knew that things were going badly, and he began to pray for deliverance. It came to him out of the unexpected.

"There," he said rather desperately, "is Seward."

Aspasia's interest returned with a flash.

"Oh, where?" she cried. "Do show me; that really thrills me. Bring him here and introduce him—at once."

Seward, called by the few who believed in him the sculptor of the future, had not yet won very wide fame, but the weird beauty and overwhelming strength and daring of his work had found him admirers who staked all their judgment on prophecy concerning him. He came up the room slowly, a square figure, carelessly dressed, hardly to be

called attractive, yet remarkable for the abiding impression of power which he conveyed.

Seward neither heard Taylor's greeting nor saw the hand he offered. He had stopped opposite their table and was staring like a man bewitched at Aspasia.

"At last," he murmured, "my Syrinx!"

Then he saw Taylor. His eye cleared, his dreamy look faded and he took the hand held out to him.

"There's room for you here, Seward. Let me introduce you to Miss Herrick."

Seward exchanged some small talk with Olivia, whom he knew already, but his eyes were all for Aspasia. Taylor watched him with his shrewd, whimsical glance. "Another woman," he thought, "for Seward's gallery"; for so the jest ran in the circle that knew the sculptor.

"No one has seen you for an age, Seward," Taylor went on.

"I've been rusticated in Paris. You see how clownish I've become. Avoid Paris, if you would keep your polish. A color can't exist in its own atmosphere, you know. So it is with manners. If you would remain the Chesterfield you are, you should avoid the great centers of civilization, Paris, Rome, Dublin, Mayfair, Belgravia, and steep yourself in Whitechapel, the Kingsland Road, the Earl's Court Exhibition or the New Cut."

"Where," Aspasia asked, with her gentlest detachment, "is the New Cut?"

"It is a place, my dear lady, to which I can't direct you. I can take you there if you wish, on an omnibus, because you don't need to tell the driver where to go. I'd rather take you in a hansom, but that gives one away so terribly. You have to shout to the man. Why were all cabmen born deaf, I wonder? If they could read, one ought to hand them a card. Really, hansomers are the last intrusion on the sanctities of the individual. Modern journalism is privacy compared with them. I once lost a woman's friendship by telling our cabby in Pall Mall to drive to the office of a great news-

paper. It was in a slum. Very tactlessly I thought to avoid mentioning the slum. The dear lady would have preferred it."

"She must have been a self-respecting person."

"So I found to my cost, Miss Her-
rick. Close behind me on the pavement
when I gave the order was a friend of
hers, an officer in the Guards."

"You deserved your fate. But what
on earth had you, a great artist, to do
with a newspaper?"

"I was going to horsewhip the editor
for an idiotic criticism he or one of his
hired assassins had written about my
'Aphrodite.'"

"I am sorry you soiled your hands
on such *canaille*."

"I was younger then, alas! than I am
now. You must let me down lightly
under the First Offenders Act."

"Yet, after all, Seward," Taylor
interposed, "the newspapers have their
little uses. My trifling theatrical affairs
are obliged to their help now and then.
Give the devil his due."

"You are utterly venal, Sam. That
comes of going to get married," Aspasia
exclaimed, giving Taylor and Olivia her
shoulder and leaning over the table
towards Seward. "Tell me, please,
what did the man say about your divine
'Aphrodite'? I can sometimes enjoy
hearing ignorant criticism. One al-
most forgives the creatures who write
it. They'd be unreadable in their dull-
ness, but for the eternal *sottise*."

"He said, if I don't misquote the
precious words, that it was a motive
of inspired ugliness, whatever that may
mean; that it was Aphrodite risen, not
from the sea, but from the cesspool; the
figure of a degenerate—lustful, de-
praved, sensual, attenuated with every
vice, named and unnamed; a foul vam-
pire, more like the nightmare of a dis-
ordered brain addled with absinthe and
evil living than the handiwork of one
who was acknowledged to be the most
virile artist of his time. You see how
cleverly the fellow evaded a libel action."

Aspasia answered with her long, low,
rippling laugh that many people found
irresistible. Taylor always heard it

with a strange dread. His sense of
music was so acute, so pure, that the
faint jarring undertone which he de-
tected in the girl's laughter told him
things he had no wish to know. "If
Motorman is still in the field," he re-
flected, "his days are numbered." Whether they had ever met again he
knew not. The girl had told no one
that she was not still with Hardiman.
All that he had heard was that she was
free for a long holiday because Hardi-
man was ill.

The mention of Aphrodite had given
Aspasia her cue, and she and Seward
were engaged in a conversation that
promised to absorb them utterly. The
moment Seward had seen her he knew
he had made a discovery. He was not
prepared for all that he had found.
Women who talked of his art with
knowledge seldom came his way and
what they did know was soon ex-
hausted. But here was one who under-
stood all schools, whose perfect knowl-
edge of the ancient had not made her
intolerant of the most modern, which
was summed up in the work of Seward.

Taylor and Olivia listened in amaze-
ment. They had never seen Aspasia
in this mood. She was usually afraid
of mere "well informed" talk; she
feared to be thought dull; she had a
supreme contempt for the pedantic.
But without any parade of learning she
was meeting Seward on his own ground,
sometimes to his disadvantage; for his
genius was not reinforced by a training
equal to Aspasia's in the history of his
art. Very soon the sculptor fell out of
the conversation almost entirely, and
was content to listen while he studied
the girl, as perfect in movement as in
repose—half tigress, half snake, at one
moment cold as the marble into which
he longed to translate her, the next a
leaping flame, so swift that no medium
save fire itself would have sufficed to
enshrine her image. For there are
phases of motion that defy the last
subtlety of pencil or chisel because the
medium is immobile.

Had Seward doubted his own powers,
the sight of Aspasia would have driven
him to despair.

The girl, too skillful to weary her new man with one theme, gradually led the conversation into other channels. Seward had lived; of that she was assured by rumor; now she knew it for herself. His experience, as far as it was communicable, should be hers. How far it might be communicable depended on his tact. If he failed in phrase, she would pretend stupidity and counter him with a cold "I do not understand what you mean." But as long as he could confess in irreproachable language, with the right use of suggestive reticence, he might confess what he pleased. And Seward, at once quick enough to realize this and vain enough to ignore the inevitable pitfall, let himself be drawn towards the one theme for which Aspasia really cared, the play of mind on mind—above all, the anatomy of that ultimate melancholy, love.

Her knowledge was as surprising as it was shameless; from the "Symposium" of Plato, which was one of the few books she misunderstood, to the ghastly scalpel work of Weininger, which she understood too well, she ranged over the whole field. When she quoted Burton of the "Anatomy" one would have thought her a philosopher. It was hard not to believe her wanton when she fenced lightly with Procopius, Apuleius, Philostratus, de Brantôme, Casanova, certain works of Mendès, Mirabeau, Pierre Louys and even the mysterious volume of the Arab Sheikh Nefzaoui.

Seward, pleased to find himself equally well armed, played as deft a foil, until Taylor, who knew enough of the game to admire the skill of the fencers, found himself dazzled by the shimmer of their blades. Olivia, who understood not at all, grew uncomfortable, and hoped that the people around them were not listening. Aspasia hoped only that they were.

Seward, who had refused to dine, called for champagne. Aspasia allowed herself one glass. Taylor took another. Olivia refused altogether. The sculptor, Gargantuan in his drinking, made haste to a second bottle. But

beyond a slight heightening of the fire in his eye and a readier and more daring speech, he gave no sign that he was the better of wine.

"Take me home, Sam," Olivia said at last. "It's very late and I have a headache."

"Poor darling," Aspasia murmured, "I fear our chatter has been too much for you. But isn't he wonderful?"

"Oh, amazing," Olivia answered, rising wearily.

"You don't need to go, Syrinx," the sculptor exclaimed. "Our talk is only begun. There's all eternity before us tonight."

"Eternity is a boring idea. Yes, I fear I must go. I could not face the everlasting. You might attempt the eternal verities, and long truths are so dull."

Seward looked at the girl with hungry admiration.

"At any rate," he pleaded, "I may see you home?"

Before Aspasia could reply, Taylor, warned by a little pressure of Olivia's hand on his arm, broke in:

"We are all going the same way, I think. Olivia wants a four-wheeler. She fears hansom accidents when she has a headache. Can we give you a lift as far as your studio, Seward?"

"I'd be delighted," the sculptor answered, pocketing his disappointment, "but I think I ought to walk to calm myself after so much brilliancy. But I must return to the sacred fount. May I call on you tomorrow, Syrinx?"

Aspasia, flushed with homage, gave the great man her address and repaid his flattery with an intimate omission.

"Till tomorrow, then—Seward," she said, with just a faint, captivating hesitation before she sacrificed the title of ceremony—"good-bye."

Two days later Sam and Olivia met Aspasia in Bond Street, and Taylor drew a bow at a venture.

"When do you sit to Seward?" he asked.

Aspasia turned on him sharply. "Who told you?" she asked with a strange menace in her eye.

Sam shrugged his shoulders. "No one. It was inevitable."

"I'm going to his studio now," the girl confessed. "He wants me for his Syrinx. Isn't it staggering?" And waving her hand she hurried on.

"Sam, dear," Olivia asked, "do you think one can go on knowing her any more?"

"Of course, you sweet Philistine. She knows perfectly well how to take care of herself. And there's no peril for her in Seward. He's too straightforward, even in his vices. Aspasia's danger lies elsewhere."

XI

To Aspasia the gods had given the paradoxical power of seeing twenty points of view at once, and yet of evading the canker of suspended judgment. As quick in action as in thought, she rejected on the instant every alternative and chose with an almost infallible instinct the expedient. Her criterion, neither moral nor immoral, was one of pure hedonism. Even where a superficial observer would have thought her moral, she was striving only to save her liberty. For that alone she faced drudgery. If at any time she found that an easier life could be purchased with slight surrender she would seize it greedily.

But that possibility, she knew, was remote. The sellers of such wares were exacting, and even if the exceptional being could be found who would give much and yet demand small toll, she dreaded the subtle tyranny of even the lightest bargain. To her the current coin in which a woman pays her share of such contracts would be a small consideration. She laughed at the convention which held that one payment meant bankruptcy. But if it gave the buyer any claim upon her, that would be bankruptcy indeed. So for the present at least that question lay outside her life. The day might come when an imperious inclination might drive her to the supreme experiment, but it must be her will, not another's,

that should be the motive force. She must be the conqueror, not the conquered.

For the moment she had found a new excitement, the more alluring because it fed her vanity. She was used to homage. Eager young painters had asked her to sit for them more than once, but when they turned the futile canvas to the wall she never asked to see it. Poetasters had brought her their limping sonnets, which moved her only to faint annoyance. Her silence soon stilled their puny pens. But her dearest dream had always been one day to inspire some great painter or sculptor or poet, and now in Seward her dream had come true. She had heard and understood his murmured exclamation in the Soho café, but his demand, for it was scarcely a request, followed sooner than she had dared to expect. When it came the delight was intoxicating. Her belief in Seward's work assured her of immortality. If only he would proclaim her to the world! But that was seldom the way. The model goes unnamed, save among the more malicious gossips and the curious compilers of notes that only posterity will read. Still, it would be something to see herself cheat death in marble, and one day perhaps Seward's industrious biographer would tell the world whose fair flesh had taught the sculptor the grace of his Syrinx.

It was with the rapture of a devotee that she obeyed Seward's call. To her, genius was sacrosanct, a thing to be worshiped with divine honors. Let the world call a man what names it would—and of Seward it was unsparing—if he had genius Aspasia set him above all law. The divinity could do no wrong. Called to be his ministering priestess, she must set everything aside for his service; provided always that he forged no fetters. She would see to that. In her new joy she took no thought of other risk. Her devotion to art was a passion almost maternal. She was to be partner in the birth of a glorious work, and the thought yielded her the ecstasy of motherhood.

People in the street turned to look

after her as she hurried to Seward's studio. To the discerning she was a revelation; to the fools a scandal, desirable or undesirable, according to their bent.

"You are radiant," the great man exclaimed as he opened the door. "I'm sorry I can't shake hands," and he waved clay-smeared fingers in deprecation.

"You are very workmanlike," she replied, looking at his long white blouse, which emphasized the distinction of his head while it concealed the ungainliness of his figure. "The right sort of Labor Member. What nonsense it is for them to try to dress in Parliamentary language! They ought to go down to the House in their corduroys, with their hods over their shoulders. Then one would respect them. Where is your hod, inspired plasterer?"

"Out on loan," he laughed; "our inspiration is none too wealthy. One has to make sacrifices."

"But why do you wash?" she asked, for Seward had plunged his hands into water.

"I don't work in common clay any more today, princess. I'll measure you first, make a charcoal sketch or two, and then we'll go out to lunch somewhere. We can begin the model tomorrow perhaps. I don't want to tire you."

"Tire me! You don't know how strong I am. Besides, I hate delays. I must see the sketch model—soon—today, please."

"We shall see. Meanwhile"—he turned away and began to pin some paper on a drawing board—"I shall be ready—as soon as you are."

He went on arranging the easel, as if that were his only concern. "I think," he said, "as far as I can judge superficially, you come very near the Greek canon of proportion."

"Rather too decadent in type, I fear."

He paused for a moment listening, until he heard a soft footfall on the throne.

"All the better for the ideal Syrinx. Ah—how perfect! Don't move—don't

vanish, goddess—I must have a sketch of that—the measurements must wait."

He threw away the tape he was twisting through his fingers and seized a stick of charcoal.

"Yes," he went on, flinging swift strokes upon the paper, "the slightly decadent type is all the better for my Syrinx. Do you know how I see her—in the sestet of a sonnet—

"And oft beneath the pitiless eye of dawn
The early shepherd, summoned by the shrill
Persuasive pipe of Pan, beside the rill

Halting his flock, twixt parted reeds would
see

Her fugitive vision soon, too soon withdrawn,
And count that moment immortality."

"That's not very original—although it's Greek enough in feeling. Who wrote the verses? I don't seem to remember them."

"It's an unpublished thing of Robert Akenside's. He showed it to me once *à propos* of a little study I made of a nymph."

"You know—Akenside!"

"Is it surprising that I should know one of the first authorities on sculpture? He does himself the honor to admire my work, and as he represents ancient thought, I think it a compliment all the greater that he's not blind to the value of the ancient informed by the modern. You know him, too?"

"His works better than himself; but I've just met him."

"He's a case of arrested artistic development. Up to a certain point he's all right—after that, pure pedant. His feeling and his taste are almost faultless, but his mind hopelessly academic. What should be art only he treats as a science. Where we feel, he reasons. But for his training he might have been one of us. How ever did you escape? You've been in the same school."

"I left Oxford at the right time. I had got all I wanted and I knew the corrosion of staying. Knowledge is less to me than life and feeling. It's an accessory that helps me to care for art—that's all. To Akenside it's everything. The others are accidents, and he has a Puritanical strain in him that makes him fear enjoyment and emotion."

"You seem to have found him out rather thoroughly at one look."

"I've seen him more than once; three times, I think."

"And you have seen me three times. I tremble. Tell me, before you get to know me better, what's my besetting weakness?"

"Genius."

"I am condemned."

"No, absolved; one doesn't judge a genius like an ordinary man."

"If I cared for what the world says, I'd wish it to think like you."

"How silly of you! If the world judged so, my judgment would be different. How dare you wish the mob to think like me? I couldn't be so undistinguished. Why do you laugh?"

"At my own folly."

"You should rather weep."

"I always laugh when I ought to weep."

"And weep when you ought to laugh?"

"No, that's too obvious an inversion. One can't sacrifice joy to unnecessary tears."

Seward turned to his easel, and for a long time worked in silence.

Aspasia's accidental pose allowed her to watch the artist, and she studied him with questioning eyes. Outwardly he was unmoved, and her vanity was slightly piqued. Thrilled with a new experience, she wished he, too, had shown emotion. But he was calm, professional almost, even in his first moment of admiration. To him, of course, the experience was commonplace, but *she* was not commonplace, and that should have made some difference. She had not asked herself how she would feel; she had known no Philistine misgiving; the whole action had been spontaneous and perfectly natural. Why should he then be moved? It was absurd to ask it, and yet it was exasperating to see his cool, businesslike deliberation. If only his hand had trembled a little! And yet, if it had, she would have been displeased, for it was this reverence alone that made the thing she was doing possible. Had Seward's calm been disturbed even to the quivering of an

eyelid or a finger, she knew she would have fled, like a nymph surprised by Silenus. Of the Silenus mood Seward gave no sign.

"You may rest, Syrinx," he said at last, stepping back from the easel.

"May I look?"

"If you like."

Folding the model's cloak about her, she glided down from the throne, with the eyes of an expectant, happy child. If Seward had chosen he would have been as famous a draughtsman as he was a sculptor, but he never cared for his sketches after they had served their turn. In the drawing Aspasia read strange and startling things. The man had been moved. Here was no mere clever expression of contour, but a record of her mood, even of her thought, during the sitting. The pose was a betrayal. She had been less spontaneous than she supposed. Of course the mere consciousness of the desire to be spontaneous was her condemnation. For all the easy grace of the figure, there was yet something in the shrinking withdrawal of limbs and veiling hands that told of the presence of Silenus, after all. Had the satyr, then, been in his thoughts, or only in hers? She put the disquieting suggestion aside and draped herself in a rapture of self-love; for the sketch, a wonderfully beautiful thing, held her enthralled. She bent towards it, her lips parted, her eyes enamored, and fed her soul with adoration, not daring to question the image further.

Seward came to her side and watched her for a little.

"You like the sketch?" he asked carelessly.

At the question her mood changed. Her face grew dark, her mouth petulant.

"You are the devil!" she snapped. "No, don't look at me, don't look at me. I thought you could, without—without *that*. While you were working I was sure you could, and I liked you for it. But your drawing betrays you."

"Believe me, it betrays *you*." He spoke steadily, with the easy tone of one accustomed to master women. Very few men can command their voices

so as to deceive a woman they care for, ever so little, but Seward had the gift to perfection.

Aspasia fell back, annoyed but quelled. He had denied the satyric influence bravely, and with superb audacity he had imputed it to her. Had he read her thoughts of a moment before? She must be careful with this fencer; his parry was too dangerous. Still, she could not resist the last word.

"The 'you're another' argument is so weak," she objected.

"Except where it is effective," he returned gently, with his imperturbable smile.

"If you're to be unpleasant, I'll go," she frowned. Then she met his eye and her sense of humor prevailed.

She tried to keep her frown, but the next moment it was swept aside in laughter.

"Please don't go till I've measured you," he said lightly. "Come here," and he took up the tape. "Besides, I thought you wanted to see a sketch model today: Syrx in miniature, a little dainty thing; Tanagra's art revived in the twentieth century. Your arm, please."

"Ugh! That steel tape is so chilly. Why don't you use a leather one?"

"It's too inexact. As a conscientious artist I work in millimetres."

"It's the only tolerable conscientiousness. I forgive you. You're not conscientious in anything else, I hope."

She thrilled slightly under his touch, but his delicacy was supreme.

As he measured he wrote down his results in a sort of ledger.

"One would think you were a bank clerk," she laughed, "or a tailor."

"The suit will never be made, but I must make up the account."

He studied his data closely, and then from an untidy heap of books on the floor he pulled out a volume and made some comparisons with his notes.

"Almost perfect," he murmured to himself.

"What book is that?"

"Akenside, on the Canon of Propor-

tion in Ancient Sculpture. You know it?"

"Yes; it's very dull," she said, flushing in slight annoyance. "The scientific mind has no imagination. Besides, he's wrong in two places."

"Who told you that—Hardiman?"

"No; I told Hardiman and he went for Akenside."

"And gave you no credit, the villain!"

"I don't want vulgar applause. Scholars' squabbles are beneath contempt. He wanted, with his beastly middle class conscience, to put my name in a footnote. If he had I'd have boxed his ears."

"Adorable fury! Now do you think you could find that pose again?"

He caught her up and before she was aware had lifted her high in the air and set her on the throne, with the apparently effortless movement of perfect strength.

"So; that is just right."

Flinging a lump of clay upon a stand, he began to work eagerly.

"You remind one of the Creation."

"You have a long memory, Eve. But you're wrong. I'm not making man. Now please let me work."

At the end of an hour Seward said he had done enough for one day.

Aspasia stamped her foot. "Go on," she cried; "I must see the model finished; I can't wait."

"You will be tired out."

"I told you, *no*." Again the foot protested.

He laughed and obeyed. The figure started into life under his hands. Shrined in the clay the artist saw his ideal, and with the sureness of the perfect master he detached all the superfluity that cumbered it till the nymph stood unveiled before him.

"May I not look at the lovely thing?"

Aspasia asked when, released at last and restored to convention, she reappeared and found the figure covered with a damp cloth.

"No, I'm not satisfied," Seward answered bluntly.

"Oh, please," she cooed, with her prettiest play of mock humility, "do!"

"Well, if you will; but I warn you, in my present mood it's perilous."

He stripped off the covering, and for a moment he let her worship her own image. Then with quick, impatient hands he crushed the model into shapelessness.

"Oh!" she protested; then rallying herself she said steadily:

"You are a very great artist; but you must really learn to control your passions."

"For a very great artist," he replied, "that is not always possible."

"I'm so glad then," she laughed, "that I'm not clay in your hands. Now please take me out and give me some dinner. I'm famishing."

XII

IF during the wonderful months that followed anyone had spoken of Aken-side to Aspasia, she would have frozen him with a well-bred stare and put his name aside with the words, "He simply doesn't exist." With Laleham it would have been different, but she was content to let him remain among the shadows. When her gods were in disgrace she punished them, and she sometimes longed for a little tangible Pantheon, from which the offending deities might be taken out at will and whipped. She would have brought even Providence to the swishing block. There was something of the nursery in her way with people she liked. It always paid to treat her as if she were five, and she was never more adorable than when she was threatened with a metaphorical cane. The threat, made with just the right invocation of the comic spirit, could disarm her in her most perverse and intractable moods. But the man who was to make that discovery was for the present non-existent, or if he did exist, it was as a dim, uncomfortable possibility, that might any day interrupt the immaculate conception and birth of the Syrinx. She was able, however, to put the thought almost entirely aside. Tomorrow and yesterday, she believed, were the fetish of the

weak. Today, so vital, so thrilling, was sufficient. Yesterday, being dead, was not worth a thought. And as for tomorrow, when she was a very little girl she had learned with Alice in Wonderland that tomorrow never came. It was the most comforting truth in that profound book.

Then, on a day of slight depression, philosophy failed her, and she had told Seward that she might leave him suddenly. The clay model was finished and Seward no longer required anyone to sit for him, but he constantly demanded her presence in the studio while he gave the Syrinx more enduring form. When he heard the reason for Aspasia's departure, he swore softly and then laughed the idea of obligation aside.

As the Syrinx grew, she saw that the sculptor had reached a new stage in his development; what had been mere crude strength in his earlier expression had yielded to a new refinement of line and contour. Hitherto he had been content to seize the thing seen and realize it with a Titanic energy that cared only for truth to the objective impression. He had been always the defiant rebel against spurious conventions of the ideal, the ideals of lesser men than himself, and his rebellion had dulled him to the true claims of that intellectual restraint without which the supreme beauty is unattainable. He had forgotten or had never realized the maxim "Nothing overmuch," until Aspasia reminded him of what it had done for the artistic expression of Hellas. He had turned on her with a gesture of contempt. He had nothing to say to outworn creeds; surely he was sufficient to himself: but she met him with, "Yes, but Seward is not Praxiteles, just yet." He put the question aside for the moment, but it drove him to the Hermes, and the Hermes sent him back to his studio chastened. As usual the girl was right. There was such a thing as absolute beauty. The beauty of beauty was the only enduring thing in art or life; the beauty of ugliness might be very well as a mood, a phase, but it could not hold the secret of eternity.

It was while she watched, with an almost maternal tenderness, Seward's growth of executive power, that Aspasia found herself wondering how she would have fared had he played the lover. But that role he ignored.

Aspasia's love of conquest had been a little piqued at first when she saw that Seward was content to remain merely a good comrade, but she soon came to see in his attitude the subtlest of compliments. He would not destroy the exquisite relation that had grown up between them by the inevitable grossness of passion.

None the less, Akenside's call was unwelcome, and only an accident of place saved Aspasia from disobeying it. He was really cleverer than she had thought to arrange things as he had, or perhaps he was only the blind instrument of a now penitent Providence. It would not do to think too flatteringly of him. Be that as it might, Rome was a formidable counterpoise to Seward. For a very little she thought the balance would incline altogether to the sculptor, but the Roman or rather the Italian scale held a make-weight that she would not acknowledge to herself. Besides, what was there to hinder Seward from following her?

She would be amused; more, he would be instructed by the event; for she would give no hint of invitation. But of the event she felt very sure. For almost the first time since her misfortunes began she was to have her cake and eat it too. To upset or disprove maxims of popular wisdom had always given her rapture hot from the pit. It was seldom that two parallel paths met short of infinity, which was too far to go, but here, within the scheme of the immediate present, she had a chance of finding the two ways conveniently joined. So the balance fell for Rome.

Seward grumbled, and when, with the sweetest hypocrisy, she pleaded moral obligation, he swore good round Cavalier oaths, the nature of which he understood as well as any man living. Then Aspasia spoke experimentally of honor, the only shibboleth her searing

wit respected. At that he gave in, threw down his chisel and proposed dinner.

"Hadn't you better go on?" she asked in a cool, even tone. "There's no time to waste."

He picked up the chisel meekly and began again. Aspasia smiled with far-away, satisfied eyes, that already saw Seward with her in Rome.

She looked further, and Seward faded out of the picture.

XIII

THE days before the journey to Rome were full of interest. Akenside, with his irritating thoughtfulness, for which he would be slapped when the time came, had not forgotten to provide for the inevitable shopping, and Aspasia after much agony and many changes of mind found herself at last with many changes of raiment. It was a long time since she had been so well prepared to face the world. Her only trouble was that in Akenside's circle there might be no people worth meeting. If his friends were all bats like Hardiman, it would be very dull.

Since Seward had come into her life, had become her life, she had seen very little of the Polite Outcasts. She meant to look some of them up before she left, but the double fascination of the Syrx and new clothes made her visiting a continually movable feast. The Taylors, she believed, had returned from their honeymoon, to which they had degraded themselves as openly as they had to holy matrimony in church. She really wanted to call on them, because she had gone to the wedding only by a vicarious telegram. On that day Seward had asked for a sitting, and of course nothing else mattered. Not even the nuptials of Zeus and Hera would have kept her from the studio. She had telegraphed, shamelessly plagiarizing the only author she thought faultless: "Very sorry, subsequent engagement," and added the usual conventional congratulations. She had laughed to think how Olivia would

puzzle over "subsequent." Sam, Aspasia knew, would understand and forgive the borrowed wit of the inversion. She was really well out of it, and besides, at the time she had nothing fit to wear.

During the last days Seward's chisel lagged provokingly. Once Aspasia tried the spur, but even at her bidding the Syrinx refused to grow. She did not insist; she had far too much reverence for an artist's moods, and his talk was very fascinating. At last he gave up even the pretense of work. "No man can serve two mistresses," he said with a shrug of despair.

"I think I shall go," she answered. "No, I didn't mean that I was the other," she added, catching the whimsical question in his look, that changed into something so intense that she grew uncomfortable. But he seemed to put aside what he meant to say, and laughing he retorted:

"Why drag in Velasquez?"

Medusa was in her look as she replied, "I will not stay here to be insulted."

"Believe me, I didn't mean to insult you," he answered. "Please forgive me."

But her face grew harder. "I care nothing for intentions. I only know what I hear, and I think your words very offensive."

Seward smiled and said no more.

She did not even look at him as he opened the door for her.

The sculptor had seen so many adventures that the unexpected always left him unconcerned. He never wasted time in regrets, and that part of his teaching Aspasia had accepted as she accepted almost all his non-moral philosophies. She had already been slightly contemptuous of caring too much for anything, and under Seward's influence her contempt had deepened into an article of faith. It seemed unlikely, therefore, that they would suffer very keenly by the quarrel, if they obeyed their own rules. But all that evening, when she tried to occupy herself with her packing, Aspasia found herself listening for the telegraph boy's knock.

It was not so much that she wanted to make up with Seward. He was less important than the Syrinx. It would be teasing if it were never finished and exhibited; worse still, he might destroy it in sheer pique as he had destroyed the first sketch model. That was a sacrilege of which she dared not think. It almost drove her to take the first step toward reconciliation. After all, she had given him the opening for his offense, and she had never before known his manners to fail. But if she moved it would be weak. Her thrust had been no excuse for his *riposte*. Even a genius, with all his privileges, must learn that there was a very great difference between what she might say to him and what he might say to her. So she hardened her heart and listened again for the telegraph boy.

A knock at last. Ages seemed to pass before the landlady saw fit to come upstairs, and Aspasia with a little cry of impatience went to meet her on the landing. The woman carried a small box. Aspasia looked again. There was nothing else. She thought the packet held some of her purchases, and laid it down without looking at the address. Then she took up a novel and tried to read. If Seward didn't want to send any message he needn't. He was a pig, that was all.

The novel was stupid. Why did people write such stuff and how in the world did it get published? She flung the book away and took down her Sappho.

She had sometimes played with the *Sortes Virgilianæ*. Sappho as the mystic spawife was a new idea. The girl held the thin volume in reverent fingers, that took a whiter delicacy from the contrast with the exquisite green binding. Murmuring a little spell she let the book open where it would. Ah, the great ode!

The vision of Aphrodite in her dove-drawn chariot swam down the ether before her.

. . . Then, as a smile immortal
Lighted that wondrous face of thine, thou
bad'st me
Tell all my sorrow, tell thee why I had called
thee

Thus out of Heaven.

Aspasia smiled whimsically; her eye rested on a later stanza:

For though he flee now, soon, ah, soon shall
he follow:

Gifts shall he bring, he that doth now withhold them,

Yea, even Love's great gift shall thy lover,
that loves not,

Give, though unwilling.

"Why do you mock me, Lesbian?" she cried, emotioning to tears.

A long lance of sunset fell on the packet Aspasia had not troubled to open. She took it up listlessly, and read the address. It startled her to fierce curiosity, and her hands trembled so that she could hardly undo the wrapper.

"Real quattrocento!" she exclaimed, catching up the perfect thing and carrying it to the window, where she turned it this way and that, delighting in the lovely miniatures on the panels of the casket—the scenes of the last act in the tragedy of John the Baptist: the saint in a dream of spiritual ivory flesh amid the gloom of his dungeon; Herod, in the banquet hall, seduced by the thin beauty of the snake Salome; Herodias in fierce counsel with her daughter; the King's disquieted consent, the prophet's victorious submission to the headsman, and, last, Salome taking her reward.

Aspasia turned the little coffer this way and that, always returning to the figure of the dancer. "How like me she is!" she murmured, and she ran to her looking glass to make quite sure.

In the lock of the casket was a tiny golden key. Aspasia waited for a moment before she turned it.

"Jewels, I wonder?" she asked her reflection in the glass. "Oh, no, far better! Even if it is never finished, I shall always have this."

She raised the little Syrinx tenderly and set it on the table. Then she knelt down beside it and questioned every illusive line of the figure, wrought from one of the fragments of the great Parian original with all the perfection of a cameo. "What a little master he would be," she thought, "if he weren't a great one! And is that really *myself*?" It was divine that she should have this copy of the unfinished work

to take with her to Italy, to have by her always, to reassure her when she doubted her own beauty. "Beauty?" She laughed. "Ah, no, I am only a plain woman with good points."

She peeped into the casket again and shrugged her shoulders. "He might have written something on it," she thought, taking up Seward's card and turning it over. "Well, he may go hang. I have my Syrinx."

She fell to worshiping the little idol once more, fearing to take her eyes from it lest when she looked again the spiritual thing should have vanished.

Until darkness fell she enjoyed her own image, forgetful of everything except that she herself had inspired this perfection. She was critical, too, and wished that the shoulders had not overbalanced the hips quite so much. She loved decadence, but for all that she would have liked her own type to be less decadent. And yet had she been more robust would she have been satisfied? Would she have made just the appeal to Seward's genius that had resulted in this? She took jealous account of all her defects and weighed them against her merits, tracing their counterpart in her mind in an agony of introspection, until she was tempted to break the statue. But she soon worked that mood to an end, and the sheer beauty of the whole work, reasserting itself, brought her comfort.

For the rest of the evening she amused herself trying on her new clothes. Then she continued her packing, sighing for a maid to save her that drudgery. She was very busy till the small hours.

"Too late to write now," she exclaimed, with a sigh half of relief, when she heard the postman slam the door of the collecting box at two in the morning, "but I can telegraph when I awake, if I still think it wise."

XIV

It was the strain of long traveling, Akenside thought, that had made Aspasia so haggard when he met her at the

station in Rome. She had done what she could for her looks all the way from Civita Vecchia, but with little success.

"You are tired?" he asked sympathetically as he put her into the cab.

"Do I look tired?" she took him up sharply. "I suppose I'm hideous—a hundred at least?"

He saw that he had blundered. "I've found a pleasant little apartment for you," he continued in even tones. "I thought you'd like that better than a *pension*." He turned and told the *vetturino* where to go.

Aspasia stamped her foot. "No, no," she cried; "to the Poste Restante—Cook's—at once." Then Akenside heard her mutter: "Silly! Some people have no imagination."

Clearly, the journey had been too much for her. He said nothing more as they drove across the Piazza delle Termini until they stopped at the corner of the Via Nazionale.

"Shall I ask for your letters?"

"No, no, I couldn't sit waiting here in the sun. Will they keep me very long?"

"Not if there are few people."

Her face turned ashen. "Please understand," she cried, "I did not come here to be insulted. I've a good mind to go back to London again. Now leave me; I prefer to go on alone. Tell me the address. Oh, don't be afraid for me! I know Italian quite well." She alighted, ignoring the hand Akenside held out to help her, and ran up the steps.

Akenside lifted his hat and turned away, feeling that the towers of Rome were rocking about him. This was not exactly the meeting he had counted on. It was a cold douche, perhaps an intentional one, to his amiable sentimentality. Truly the way of sentimentalists is hard. The first transgression begins an endless chain. He had fallen, seduced by Hardiman, had got over his first qualms and then went from bad to worse, spending an Arcadian week arranging a little apartment in the Via Capole Case for the expected angel; and lo, there had arrived a Fury! He had not been tactful, certainly, in the first re-

mark, but where, he wondered, was the insult in the last? In its obviousness, most likely; how dull he was! Nothing riled her like the obvious; and of course there was the very trying journey; some anxiety or worry, too, that explained her haste to the Post Office. Much must be forgiven to a woman; everything if she is beautiful. But he wished himself less of a novice.

His brow cleared a little. He lighted a cigar and strolled towards his hotel in the Via Venti Settembre. Just as he turned out of the Piazza he looked back. Aspasia had not been kept waiting. Paler, if possible, than before, and with a strange air of tragedy, she came slowly down the steps, crushing a telegram in her hand.

Sufficient self-restraint was granted to him to go on his way. But his brow had clouded again; he let his cigar go out, and a host of misgivings assailed him. However, this hell broth was of his own brewing. He must drink it like a man. For the present he would forget it and go to call on Urbano. No, a long walk into the Campagna would be better.

He returned calmer about four o'clock and sent a messenger to the Via Capole Case with a note asking how Miss Herrick was after her journey. At the end of what seemed an interminable age, the boy returned with the answer:

In bed with a dreadful headache. The rooms are very nice, on the whole. I like the garden of the Carthusian convent at the back, but not the sitting room wall paper. You will quote something, I know, about gift horses, but that's not my way.

J. H.

"Poor little woman," Akenside murmured, laying down the note. "The headache must be very bad. Gift horses are the last thing you would suggest to me." He sighed rather wearily, for he had taken great pains with the flat, and the wall papers had cost him much consideration. He went up to his room, and, knowing that it was impossible to work and useless to go to bed, he put on his cloak and strolled as far as the Café Colonna. At last he drifted into one of those living picture theaters which delight the lei-

sure of the Roman *bourgeoisie*, and went away comforted to a night of foolish, flattering dreams.

But it was the spirit of the Carlovingian that surprised Akenside when he called at the Via Capo le Case next morning. Pale and a little anxious, but very gracious, Aspasia in a filmy white morning gown floated to meet him. The mystery of her eyes, he thought, was deeper, and there was pain behind their quizzical humor, but that might only be the aftermath of fatigue.

"Yes, I'm quite well again," she laughed. "I'm so glad you have the sense to see it. People drive me nearly mad when they hold one's hand, and say doubtfully, 'I hope you're better,' when one's health is staring them in the face. And now, please, I'm ready to work. Isn't that virtuous?"

"Almost to the point of vice. I must suppress it. No, work can wait until tomorrow. Come, before it gets too hot, and see something of Rome. I'll tell you about work as we go along, and salve your rudimentary conscience, if you like. By the way, where did the conscience come from? It seems unfamiliar."

She gave a bewitching little smile.

"I've developed a great deal lately. I suppose I need a conscience now, and evolution has supplied the necessary organ."

"Your development has been scientific, then?"

"No, purely artistic. I must be dull today, if you think me scientific."

"No, I am dull not to see that it was only a refinement of art that made you talk in the terms of science to help my slow wits."

She knitted her brows. "That's rather complex, isn't it? You think it's subtle, but I'm sure it isn't. It's not simple enough for that. Yes, I'll come with pleasure. I sha'n't be a moment."

He turned and looked round the room, at the wall paper she did not like yesterday, at the few dainty pieces of furniture she liked well enough, probably, for she had said nothing about

them, at— He moved forward eagerly. What wonder was this, and where had it come from? Not antique, certainly, but how exquisite in spirit and workmanship! Only one man living could do that; but how in the world did it come here?

He looked closer, with a vague dread. O God, there was no mistaking it! This, then, was the artistic development. Well—he struggled against emotions that had their source, he knew, in ignoble jealousy—it was very beautiful, a thing to thank heaven for in sordid times. A great wave of pure worship bore his spirit up. Again he was in the darkened church on the Monte Capucino, acclaiming the perfect woman . . .

"You like my Syrinx?"

He did not turn around! "It is amazing. If Seward takes care, one day we may set him beside Praxiteles."

"Oh, you *are* disappointing! Always the wretched pedant's historical comparison. Couldn't you have stopped at 'amazing,' like the marriage service? Surely he is great enough already to be judged by himself. Now tell me, how do you like my hat? I don't suppose you know enough about millinery to compare that to anything."

"It is also—amazing; today we may set it beside the most beautiful mushroom that ever grew."

"Don't be so absurd. Why didn't the gods give you a little imagination?"

"True," he replied humbly, as they went downstairs, "I have none." Then looking at Aspasia with good-humored irony, Akenside proposed to take a *vettura* and drive first to the Post Office.

"Yes, please do," she replied, with easy detachment, putting up her parasol. "For a few days I must depend on the Poste Restante. I told my friends Cook's. It was dismal to have no letters this morning."

As the *vettura* rattled down the steep, narrow gullet of the Via Sistina, Aspasia and Akenside were silent. Both were thinking of the Syrinx, he with a strange, painful curiosity, she with a curious pleasure that Akenside had come through the ordeal of recognition

so well. He might not have a first-rate mind, but he had a saving humor and decent intelligence. The hat had been a godsend, just when the situation was becoming intense. She thought she had seldom been more adroit, and he had not done badly, for a person of *his* class. At last she spoke:

"It's clever of you not to 'guide book' me. I thought you'd say, 'Now we're crossing the Piazza Barberini, and there's the Triton, and the long, steep street we're just going to climb is the Via Quattro Fontane, and here on the right with the St. Andrew's cross above the door is the Scots College—your patriotism, Bonnie Prince Charlie and all the rest of it, should have remembered not to forget to tell me that.'"

"You know Rome, then?"

"Not a bit; only from books and pictures. Otherwise I'm vestal virgin to the fascinations of the seven hills. When I don't know a place, I'll ask what it is, and I hope you won't be able to tell me."

"We shall go down to the Piazza di Spagna; it's too early for the models, but there are the flowers. And then we'll go up the steps of Trinità dei Monte and along the Pincio, to let you have your first glimpse of distant St. Peter's framed in the dense ilex foliage beside the fountain."

"That sounds very pleasant." She murmured the last word luxuriously, lingering over it with a tender reverence that stirred Akenside's remembrance of its meaning. To a hedonist like Aspasia the word had an almost ritual sanctity; she never pronounced it except to exalt it. It expressed for her the ultimate essence of well-being. "Oh, it's pleasant, very pleasant," she repeated, when they came at last to the flower stalls on the steps of Trinità dei Monte, where Akenside bought her a great cluster of roses.

"That finishes the picture," he said, presenting the flowers with old-fashioned gallantry.

She pressed her face to the roses. "Very sweet," she murmured. "Thank you so much. Are they from Pæstum, do you think?"

"Who's a little pedant now?" he asked, laughing.

"Don't be catty," she admonished, looking at him with a mischievous sidelong glance across her bouquet. "Tell me, have you brought your car to Italy?"

"No, the official arrangements were too worrying. I wish I had; we could have gone to Tivoli. I went there the other day by the cheap excursion, conducted by a so-called professor of archæology, a genial person like a retired horse dealer, who delivered the funniest lectures in Roman French. But I had Horace in my pocket for an antidote."

"How like you! A person who would go to Tivoli with Horace in his pocket is capable of anything. I can imagine you crooning to yourself in an ecstasy of superiority:

*"Tibur argæo positum colono,
Sit mihi sedes utinam senecta
Sit modus lasso maris et viarum,
Militæque!"*

"The Senior Fogies' Club in Pall Mall would please you far better. When you should have thought only of the woods and falling waters, you enjoyed your debauch of sentiment and posed to yourself as a sailor-man and soldier-man in one—a sort of 'His Majesty's Jolly'—rejoicing in the thing you're not."

"*Militat omnis amans*," he retorted boldly; "there's Ovid for your Horace, principessa," and he triumphed wickedly to see her eyes go down. He took out his pencil case and wrote on the flyleaf of the little Horace,

To Madonna Aspasia
from the humblest of her worshipers,
R. A.

"Will you take it?" he asked, when he had added the date; and laughing she accepted the gift.

"It sounds irreverent," she objected, reading the inscription, and he started at the memory of Monte Capucino, of which he had not thought when he wrote the playful lines. "It's a lovely little edition," she continued, "but if we're to go on in this disgraceful way, you might as well tell me what you

want me to do for you while I'm here. It would, at any rate, be practical," she suggested, recovering herself.

"Very well, then," he replied, surprised at his own courage; "I want you to be my wife."

They had reached the top of the steps before Aspasia answered.

"No," she murmured gently, turning to look with far-away eyes over the city. "The time has gone past for that. Perhaps—don't think me very immodest, but impulse is everything to me—if you had asked me that first evening, on the car, I would have said 'Yes.' Oh, why do things always come at the wrong time?"

He gave an impatient cry. "Now I've spoiled everything!"

"Not at all; that is only a silly convention. I suppose," she added, with adorable malice, "you'll expect me next to say I'll be a sister to you."

"Heaven forbid!" he exclaimed, catching her humor and wise enough to see that it offered a way of escape from threatening emotions. "A cousin if you will; there's hope for cousins."

"It would be safer, I think, to be your aunt, if one must become a blood relation after saying 'No' to a man; but why not let us go on as before? I don't see why there should be any false shame for a question asked and answered. Now tell me about my work."

"You know," Robert began, mastering his chagrin, "when I was going to Crete I met a friend who persuaded me to help him with a book of his. I spent the autumn in Crete and then joined my friend here. You will meet him at lunch today. I promised to join him at a curious little Bohemian place in the Via dei Prefetti, off the Corso."

"Oh, dear," she cried, "another Dryasdust!"

"Wait until you see him. He's a charming old man!"

"Oh, is he old? That may be fascinating. By the way, you are quite old, aren't you?"

"Just fifteen years younger than my friend. And now that I've given him and myself away, and if you've ad-

mired St. Peter's enough, shall we go down before the sun grows too hot? After lunch you must go back to your rooms and rest."

"Must," indeed? I will do nothing of the sort, unless I choose. I will not be ordered about by anybody."

An empty *vettura* was trailing along the Pincio. Akenside hailed it and bade the man drive to the Ristorante Sorra Nina.

"THE place is not at all smart," Akenside told Aspasia, as they entered the Via dei Prefetti; "but it's amusing. We'll see authors, musicians, actors, artists, journalists; such Bohemia as there is in Rome meets there."

"I don't want to see journalists," Aspasia pouted; "but if there are any distinguished people among the others, I may be interested. Do you know any?"

"A few. For instance, my friend, Professor Urbano, who is very anxious to see you."

"Urbano, Urbano," Aspasia repeated, trying to recall the name—"Oh, the Sappho man! I suppose he's an old pedant! You're very disappointing." She twitched her nose daintily in disapproval. It was one of her funniest and most fascinating tricks when she was displeased. Not another muscle of her face moved during the tiny spasm, and the effect was distractingly comical. "Why do you laugh?" she demanded.

"At the little screw of your nose. It's a whole Odyssey of disgust in miniature."

"That's meant for an epigram, I suppose. How like you! A vile phrase packed with learned lumber. Urbano would think it clever, I'm sure."

"You'll be very sweet to Urbano, for all that. He's a charming person; besides, he'll atone for himself. He's bringing a young man, an artist, one of his protégés, to meet us."

"An artist?" Aspasia cried. "Whom?"

"I don't know his name. Urbano didn't tell me in his note. His friend has just come from Florence. Urbano said he was a clever boy he believed in, and he wanted me to meet him."

"Those people who let themselves be taken up and 'believed in' are usually the last delusion of the credulous," Aspasia demurred. "I shall have a dull lunch. A boy, too; boys are so crude."

"At any rate," Akenside remarked consolingly, "the food will be subtle."

"That's comforting, at least. No, certainly it doesn't look a smart place outside, but I like it all the better for that. No, please don't help me down. I hate to be touched."

She waved away his hand and they entered the long, low-ceiled *tattoria*. Professor Urbano rose from a table at the further end and came to meet them. He looked at Aspasia with admiration and welcomed her with a stately old-fashioned courtesy that became him very well, bending over her hand and kissing it with the inevitable homage of the Italian to a fair woman. He took her parasol, asked her where she preferred to sit, and placed her chair with an easy grace and fine manner that the younger man envied.

Aspasia, who had expected a formal schoolman and was prepared to act on the defensive, flushed with pleasure and surrendered on the instant. "After all," she thought, "he is pleasant to look at, he has a delicious voice, and he is not so very old after all. Akenside's few gray hairs make him exaggerate the terrors of age. That is the defect of half-measures. Poor Motorman is neither old nor young."

"My friend is late," Urbano said, taking up the *menu*, "but we shall not wait for him. Will the signorina choose, or shall I order a truly Roman lunch for her?"

Without thinking, he had asked the question in his own language, and when Aspasia answered in her beautifully cadenced voice, speaking Italian with a perfect accent, Urbano looked at her again with delight.

"Anything," she cried, "anything

that you order will be charming. I never like the worry of choosing, and I shall be free to look at the people. Do, please, show me everybody; but"—she flashed a little two-edged smile at Akenside—"leave out the journalists."

"To Miss Herrick," Akenside explained, "journalists are anathema."

"And why, my dear lady?" Urbano asked indulgently.

"They pretend to know everything and they haven't even begun to know anything."

"I only hope," the Professor replied, laughing, "they will never begin to know anything; for a great part of the world's gaiety will then be eclipsed for me."

Aspasia turned acid. "That," she said with icy superiority, "is something I don't understand. Once I thought I did, but I have progressed."

"Thank heaven, signorina, you are too young to understand the pleasures of an old cynic like myself. I can recommend these calves' brains; one gets them better here than anywhere else in Rome."

Aspasia allowed herself to be cajoled.

Wiser by yesterday's experience, Akenside watched apprehensively the passage of the little storm, and it was with infinite relief that he saw it give place to sunshine. For many reasons he wanted Aspasia to show herself at her best to Urbano. Robert had in him a strain of the man of business. The work they were to do during the next few weeks was serious, and he did not wish the Professor to think that the accomplished woman upon whose help he counted so much was only a flighty child, with the aims of a spoiled *cocotte*, whom an infatuated recluse had mistaken for her better. But he need hardly have troubled, for Urbano's experience and quick intuition had divined the girl's mind. He saw what he had to deal with; and his infinite tact saved him from every pitfall. He talked amusingly of Rome and the Romans, steering the conversation at last towards modern art, at which Aspasia caught fire and surprised the

elderly amateur with her knowledge and the delightful freshness of her views.

"But signorina," he exclaimed, "you already know Rome."

"Not at all," she said. "It is my first visit."

"Then we have a great deal in store," he replied with a gay acceptance of comradeship; "the Vatican, the Borghese, the Barberini, the Rospigliosi, the Doria-Pamphili, and I can take you to many galleries the everyday visitor does not see. You must let me be your guide."

"That is very sweet of you."

"I raise my glass," he cried boyishly, "to our better acquaintance. But here," he added, springing to his feet, "is the truant at last. We had almost given you up. Come and let me introduce you— What! you know each other already? How fortunate!"

They were so placed that Akenside saw the newcomer an instant before Aspasia. A sudden freezing of his look gave her a strange premonition of two possibilities, but she held herself in check, and a moment later had held out to Urbano's latest guest a hand that trembled ever so little, while she murmured something quite polite and unmeaning.

Akenside with an effort emulated the girl's cool politeness.

"I am very angry with you, Maurice," she said quietly, as the other sat down, "and I don't know whether I'm glad to see you or not. It's quite plain, however, that you're glad to see me. I thought you had more self-control." Then in a lower tone she murmured: "Don't call him Motorman here. His name's Akenside. Now tell me where you have been all this time. It was infamous of you not to write."

"I waited," he said briefly.

"So it would appear." Her lightly veiled sarcasm stung him, but he covered his annoyance and turned with his exquisitely courteous smile to their host.

"Professor Urbano," he said in clear, even tones, "you are a master of pleas-

ant surprises. I don't know how to thank you enough."

"My dear boy, the debt is mine. It's you, remember, who brought in the element of surprise."

"I think rather," Laleham answered, "we owe it all to Mr. Akenside. He seems to have a genius for these charming unexpected meetings."

He poured out wine and turned to Akenside.

"Here's to the spirit of the Carolingian," he cried, "and the pleasantest evening of my life!"

"And the most memorable of mine," Akenside returned, clinking glasses and eyeing his man.

"I'm rather in the dark," Urbano interposed, "but I know the Carolingian." He touched the other glasses with his own. "I like this humble place better, and the other can't be more cheerful."

"We three met first at the Carolingian," Laleham explained.

"Ah, happy memories, happy memories!" the Professor sighed, with Southern sentiment. "Enviably young people."

"Enviably; yes, is it not so, Miss Herrick?" Laleham paused with ever so delicate a question on the name, just glancing at Akenside as he spoke.

"Yes, yes," Aspasia agreed, adding a careless aside to Laleham: "you may say Herrick. I'm still free—and a bondwoman."

"Then," Laleham asked, "I suppose the egregious Hardiman is in Rome too?"

"The egregious Hardiman," Akenside echoed, with mild irony, "is going round the world for his health. By this time, I believe, he has got as far as Japan."

"Poor man! He will be rather out of the picture there; but I'm sorry he's ill, though he was an Egyptian taskmaster," Laleham exclaimed. "It's a wonder he didn't break other people down as well."

"Other people," Aspasia laughed, "understood the gentle art of saving themselves. Otherwise, one would

have choked in the atmosphere of his conscientiousness."

"Are you a conscientious taskmaster, Professor Urbano?" Laleham asked, fencing for information, and as curious as a woman to know for whose service Aspasia had exchanged Hardiman's.

"I'm a demon to work," the Professor replied, "but whether I drive other people unmercifully you know best yourself. Stop me in time, if I do, my dear boy," and he laid a hand kindly on Laleham's.

"For myself, I don't mind, but I warn you, I'll stop you soon enough if you overwork Miss Herrick."

"No, you'll wait till you're asked, please. I'm my own mistress, so far. Besides, you are putting the saddle on the wrong horse. And do, please, let's talk of something else besides beastly work—on my second day in Rome, too. You've grown unusually tactless, Maurice. What sort of people have you been going among?"

Laleham smiled, delighted that his diplomacy had told him all that he wanted to know.

"I've been by myself, chiefly," he confessed complacently.

"The worst possible company. No wonder, then, you're dreadful."

"Well, I've a chance to be virtuous now," he sighed.

"How dull! Really, Maurice, I shall write and tell the Polite Outcasts that their president no longer exists. Have you sold yourself to the devil of Philistinism?"

"I have," he replied deliberately, leaning his chin on his hand and looking at Aspasia with a slow, earnest gaze.

"I don't believe you," she cried, laughing rather wildly and avoiding his eye. "Don't be so silly," she added weakly, for when he grew serious she began to feel his power, the insistent supremacy she dreaded. She knew that in some moods he could make her do or believe anything he pleased. Laleham supreme in her life was the very last thing she wanted just now. She glanced at him again. How beautiful he looked, and how vicious! Urbano, for all that his years had taught him,

looked almost crude beside this daringly experienced boy. As for Akenside, he seemed a maiden aunt. He only wanted a cap with strings. Even Seward—but she put that thought away from her with both hands and made conversation happily enough until lunch came to an end.

After some fencing, Akenside and Laleham found less to say to each other, and the party divided into two camps. Slightly mortified, Robert gave up Aspasia to Laleham, and when they left the restaurant, he knew that it would be politic to make himself scarce. But Fate denied him the credit of masterly withdrawal, and sent him something very like a dismissal.

"We don't need to play the Paduan game here," Aspasia exclaimed as they came out.

"No," Akenside assented rather grimly, "for the devil, I think, has already taken the hindmost."

"Well, if you *are* slow," she murmured with provoking sweetness, "you needn't be unpleasant about it. Maurice, will you drive me home, please? You must have ever so much to tell me."

Akenside recovered his good humor with a grappling iron and went with Urbano to his house.

In the *vettura* Aspasia sat as far from Laleham as she could, and eyed him with displeasure. After the sweetness of her invitation he was puzzled, but he concealed his annoyance with a skill for which Akenside would have given all his learning.

"So," Aspasia said, after a long silence, "that is your patron."

"You like him, I hope." Laleham ignored her faint scorn on the last word.

"He is quite civilized, far more of *our* world than most of his class. Yes, I like him, except that he seems not to leave you so free as you told me that night at the Alameda. He said something about seeing you tomorrow about work, almost with the air of a proprietor. And why did he want you to meet Mr. Akenside? Surely, you are above their common interests."

"Not altogether. Urbano wants me to make some studies of the antique for that new book of theirs."

"*You*—wants *you* to make illustrations for a book?" Aspasia turned dangerous eyes on Laleham. "Of course you'll do nothing of the sort."

"I have promised. Surely there's no harm in work that you will share."

"With me it's different. I'm a mere useful machine. I sacrifice nothing. I violate nothing sacred to myself. I only sell that most contemptible accident, my 'scholarship'—horrid word! For you, an artist—an artist among artists, it's prostitution. These people have demoralized you with their money. Oh, tell him to stop; tell the man to stop! Here's the house. Good-bye. I sha'n't ask you in today; I'm far too angry."

She was gone with a whisk of tempestuous petticoats, and Laleham, smiling gently to himself, bade the man take him on to Professor Urbano's.

XVI

"I AM dead," Aspasia told herself when she awoke next morning. "I shall never feel anything poignantly again."

She examined her soul with affectionate interest, likening it to some rare pearl grown sick and dull, and wondering if any sea of emotion could be found to restore its luster. Her very hopelessness was a luxury, a small one, it is true, and scarcely thrilling, but she indulged it as the last pleasure she might ever know. There was nothing for her now but the gray stretches of life dragging on into middle age. Would she allow them to take her so far? she wondered; but she was a great coward. Very likely she would reach old age as others did, merely for want of resolution to prevent it.

The early post brought a note from Akenside asking Aspasia to come to Professor Urbano's at ten o'clock. With a dull, heavy acquiescence she prepared to obey. "I have not even spirit enough left to kick at slavery,"

she sighed. "I shall dress quite simply, like a good little drudge, and they will find me meek and willing—perhaps."

She left the Via Capo le Case at nine, for she wanted an hour in the sunshine before going into prison. She strolled along to Trinità dei Monte, and went down the steps to the Piazza di Spagna, where she laughed quietly at some American tourists, early birds gaping after their worm—in this case, Keats's house.

Aspasia enjoyed her walk. The charming courtesy of the Italians of whom she asked her way once or twice, the new scenes and new faces brought her to Urbano's apartment in an angelic humor. The Professor's rooms, with their marks of wealth, their perfect taste, their profusion of books, delighted her, and she settled down almost happily to look up some authorities for Akenside. Robert had received her quite faultlessly, she thought; he looked cool and silvery gray, and there was nothing in his manner to suggest the pique of yesterday. For that grace she forgave him a great deal. She even pretended to be interested in the outline he gave her of their work—a critical account of some recent discoveries, very vital to the link between Greek and Greco-Roman sculpture. Then the Professor bustled in for a few minutes from his own study, and made himself very agreeable with his fatherly air and his pretty compliments. He showed her one or two exquisite little bronzes, and his eyes sparkled when she said just the right thing about them, naming the period and making a happy guess at their descent.

"I love this particularly," Urbano said, touching a tiny Aphrodite in a shrine that opened with a secret spring, "and I often carry it about with me to refresh me."

"Esthetic smelling salts," Aspasia commented merrily, and Urbano with a peal of delighted laughter returned to his room.

"I can't cap that, Akenside," he said, "so I leave the field to you."

All day Aspasia was on the alert for some word or sign of Laleham, but

neither Akenside nor Urbano spoke of him. When visitors called for the Professor, the girl strained her ears to catch the low murmur of voices behind the folding doors, and Akenside, seeing her heightened color, guessed what she was thinking and felt the grip of jealousy about his heart. Since yesterday, he had known that his game was lost, but his philosophy was all too weak, as yet, to master passion. He clung to every shred and patch of hope, wrapping the miserable garment about him and taking what comfort he could from the rags. He worked feverishly, but without concentration, and once or twice he made little slips which Aspasia corrected with a cool ease and a deprecatory lift of eyebrows that wounded his vanity. He thanked her with studied courtesy and called himself a blockhead, but it maddened him to feel that his thanks betrayed the jarring note of ruffled temper, and he knew that the girl saw it and enjoyed her little triumph. He began to hate Hardiman for his legacy, and to curse himself for his folly in accepting it.

In the days that followed, the three colleagues fell into routine, but it was not altogether dull for Aspasia. She saw new people, some of whom she thought charming; for Urbano's house was a meeting place of wits and his circle had no heavy atmosphere of learning. He knew everyone worth knowing in the Black world, but the exclusiveness was salted with a fine flavor of distinguished cosmopolitanism that gave his evenings just the piquancy Aspasia's paradoxical nature liked. She made everyone her slave and tyrannized mercilessly over an elderly prince of the Church.

"What a pity," she said to Akenside as they walked home together after one of the Urbano evenings, "what a pity I can't marry the Cardinal!"

"What a pity," Akenside replied, "that the Cardinal can't marry you!"

"Will you never be cured of wretched little cheap jokes?" she asked loftily. "I don't understand that type of mind."

He felt himself flush with annoyance

and was glad that the Via Sistina was so dark. But it did not save him.

"Now you are furious," she went on. "I'm sure you're red all over. You're really the worst-tempered man I know."

If he had not loved her so much he would have found his reply easily enough, but with Aspasia he was never equal to the occasion, and the thought maddened him. There fell an awkward silence.

"Well," she asked sharply, "isn't it true?"

They walked a little further before Akenside spoke again. "Aspasia," he said coldly.

"Yes, Mr. Akenside." The faint accent on the "Mister" told that she resented the familiar name, which he had come to use quite easily but always with a slight misgiving, for she had never called him Robert, or even Akenside.

"Will you do me a favor?"

"I don't know," she replied, with a quick suspicion in her tone; "what is it?"

"Do you think I'll ask too much?" he protested. "You have no faith in me."

"Why should I have 'faith in you'?"—again the inverted commas—"Well, I'm waiting. What is it?"

"Please don't snap at me as you've been doing." He grew rather vehement. "I can't bear it, and really I won't bear it any longer. Or, if you must, let it be when we're alone. Once or twice lately you've done it before Urbano—"

"Oh," she broke in coldly, "that's the trouble, is it? Our twopenny dignity is hurt. And so you use your authority to bully me. You know I'm dependent on you, and you think you can treat me as you please. If I could, I would leave you at once and go back to England, but you know I can't! If you had an atom of chivalry you would never speak to me so. I'm not used to being spoken to like that. The people I go among know better manners. You deserve to be horsewhipped."

Akenside struggled to keep his voice, but his emotion betrayed him.

"Miss Herrick," he cried brokenly, and he knew that the girl was enjoying his discomfiture, "I thought we were far too good friends—"

"Friends!" she caught him on a spearpoint of scorn; "what miserable cant! Of course, you are lecturing me 'for my good.' When people are nasty it is always 'for one's good.' You pretend to be my friend and you can't endure even the merest fancied scratch to your wretched self-esteem. Oh, how well I know you Scotsmen! Sentimental! Touchy! Insincere! You have been very kind to this forlorn girl; you deserve better treatment. She is not treating you with proper respect, proper gratitude. Kindness of your sort wouldn't call for gratitude, even if I believed in such a thing, which I don't. True kindness doesn't know that it is kind. I'd rather have one unconsciously generous action from a person, an Irishman for choice, who stabbed me in the back the next minute, than all your precious 'consideration.' Consideration—bah!—that goes admiring itself all the way. And then you bully me! It's offensive, unpardonable! As for your friendship, I don't want it; it's not worth having. In future, please, treat me on a purely business footing."

"With all my heart," he replied savagely; "so be it."

When they parted Aspasia did not return his "Good night." She went to her rooms and for a while paced furiously up and down. "The hound!" she cried, clenching her fists, "the insolent hound!" Then she laughed wildly. "But it's no use," she wailed. "I'll never be able to keep it up; my preposterous sense of humor won't let me be angry long." She went to bed and dreamed of Maurice Laleham's skill with the horsewhip.

Akenside spent the night in purgatory. Aspasia's cudgeling had left him very raw.

During those days of quiet work, when the book was growing steadily to his own and Urbano's satisfaction, Robert watched himself with amused surprise. His work was no longer his

life, but something subordinate to a supreme interest. He had almost persuaded himself that it was no longer the interest of pursuit; for it seemed that he had reached a point beyond which his friendship with Aspasia would never go, and he resolved that he would school himself to reconciliation with that bitter knowledge. Again and again during sleepless hours he reproached himself for not getting rid of her, and more than once he resolved to do what a strong man ought, only to recoil, beaten, before the girl's quiet fascination when he met her the next morning.

She was well trained and well armed for the fight for existence. Today he served her turn, and as long as he did that she would hold him prisoner. He understood quite well that the moment he was useless she would break him between her delicate hands, and turn elsewhere, and although the thought galled him, he could not voluntarily shut out her presence. However contemptuous she might be of mere scholarship, she was essentially a creature of Greece in its best days, of Greece and of the Renaissance. He loved to think that she had lived a splendid, thrilling life in both epochs, and that she had been born again to unite their spirit with the best that modernity had to bestow. Once he said so to Urbano, and the old man's eye had kindled with an almost youthful fire as he confessed that Robert had made his own undefined thought articulate.

"She is a wonderful creature, Akenside," he assented enthusiastically. "She seems, for all her vagaries, to bring out all that is best in you." Then after a pause he added: "Why don't you marry her?"

Akenside shrugged his shoulders. "That dream is over, Urbano," he replied briefly; and the old man with a gentle, "Ah, forgive me, Akenside; I'm a romantic old fool," returned to his books.

With such thoughts jostling a mad fantasy through his brain he sat one evening in the winter garden of his hotel and tried to be amused watching the people around him. But there was no

distraction. He caught himself sooner or later contrasting every woman with One, to every woman's utter disadvantage. Everything seemed hopelessly dull. "I must cure this homeopathically," he reflected, and sent a waiter for the *Times*.

Taking the three-days-old newspaper from the man, Akenside turned it over, not caring what it contained, but his eye fell on a name that stung him into interest. He turned back to the beginning of the article and read with fierce attention:

At last the ablest of our younger sculptors has justified the promise of his earlier efforts. Hitherto we have suspected him of dallying, one might almost say of flirting, with a score of minor inspirations, and it was hard to tell whether he really took his genius seriously, but now he has earned his title to fame. One still sees the trier in the smaller works he has exhibited at the Draycott Gallery, but he has atoned for these frivolities in the splendor and mystery of the masterpiece that puts everything else in the room out of account. Mr. Seward's *Syrinx* is the most wonderful harmony of the classical and the romantic spirit; in it he has seized and wedded two motifs which conventional criticism has held to be ruthlessly opposed, and from their union has sprung the most exquisite of modern poems. This girl beloved of Pan is certainly an immortal, yet in a very poignant and terrible sense a mortal also. The artist has sounded the gamut of the ages. Here is the youth and freshness of Arcady; here also the sadness and stress of today. This elusive nymph is still a very woman, a woman of whom increase of knowledge has brought increase of sorrow, and although, as we look at her, we seem to hear the pipes of the goat-footed god, we hear also the melancholy undertone of the latter day poet's Ballad of Burdens. One looks, admires, wonders and turns away, regretting that Mr. Pater did not live to see a work for which he alone could have said just the right word of appreciation.

"Well," Akenside mused, "the critic may be a wordy ass, but at least he is reverent." A wave of overwhelming emotion shook him and a wild revelrout of thoughts clamored for expression, but he held them at bay for the loathly things they were. Why could he not be impersonal? Why should the critic's praise of what was after all only a beautiful abstraction wring him with these tormenting jealousies, this anger for the too generous impulse that

had brought Seward to his own? He had always wanted the fellow to succeed; he was glad he had succeeded at last; but why had success come to him in just this way? Surely in the wide world there were others who did not matter. Seward was an all-devouring egoist.

XVII

"Good morning, Mr. Akenside. You are in a bad temper."

Aspasia looked up from her desk with her most demurely provoking smile as Robert entered.

"Only a little tired, that's all."

"A man has no business to be 'a little tired'; that's very womanish of you. You ought to take more exercise. I take a long walk every morning on the way here, and every evening, after I leave. Sometimes I go as far out the Appian Way as Cecilia Metella."

"And come back in the dark alone? That is very unwise."

"Bah! Brigands are an exploded superstition, and as for footpads or hooligans, look here!" She held out a pretty little revolver.

"Put away that ugly toy. I'm sure it's quite useless. You want someone to take care of you."

"Indeed! Thank you, I can take care of myself perfectly well. Besides, I must have my walk to keep me fit. You can't say I'm not looking fit."

Akenside's eyes told her that she was more than merely "fit." Italy had been very kind to her. That caressing air, that volcanic soil, were doing their inevitable work, and Aspasia had grown to a perfection of womanly charm that the sterner North denies its daughters. Some subtle magic stirred in her veins, awaking slumbering instincts and desires; her splendid vitality seemed to suffuse her beautiful body with a soft and captivating radiance. She reminded Akenside of the rose waiting for the nightingale to sing its heart out against the thorn. He looked at her closely, noticing how her contours had grown

more beautifully rounded, yet without any sacrifice of bewitching elegance. Then at the insurgent thought of the Syrinx he turned his eyes away.

"Surely you can tell whether I am fit, without looking at me like that," she laughed petulantly. "One would think I were a creature in a menagerie or a specimen in a museum, from the way you study me."

"The proper study of mankind is woman," he misquoted feebly.

"Don't try to rewrite Pope," she advised. "You're not clever enough, ough!" For the first time Urbano, who had come into the room unnoticed, saw the little contraction of Aspasia's nose, and he and Akenside, catching each other's eye, laughed at the irresistibly comical twitch.

"I wonder," Urbano exclaimed merrily, "can you ever be serious for five minutes? Will you turn this into ridicule too? Here," and he waved a newspaper, "is something very important to us who love art," and he began to read the *Times* account of the Syrinx.

Akenside watched Aspasia with anxious eyes. Almost from the first sentence she had guessed what the notice meant, and she leaned forward eagerly to listen. Robert thought she looked like a greedy child before whom a feast is being spread. When Urbano had finished, she begged for the paper and pored over it, critically contracting her eyebrows. As she read a delicate color came into her cheeks.

"I knew that young man would justify himself one day," Urbano remarked. "Have you seen the notice, Akenside?"

"Yes," Robert replied unwarily; then he paused awkwardly, knowing that he had laid a rod in pickle for himself. He felt rather than saw the look that Aspasia darted at him.

The Professor, unconscious of any byplay, turned to Aspasia. "Very gratifying, is it not?" he asked.

"Gratifying to whom?" Aspasia asked, with a little sub-acid laugh. "Not to the artist, surely? I should think that tirade of would-be-cultured journalese would make him very angry,

if he stooped to read what the newspapers say about him."

"But the *Times*, my dear lady, the *Times*," Urbano protested.

"My dear Professor Urbano, one would think you were a British country squire; your faith in the *Times* is really quite touching."

"I suppose that's one penalty of my cosmopolitanism," the Professor replied good-humoredly; "but what a little iconoclast you are!"

"Not of Seward's images, at any rate."

"You know his work?"

"Yes, it has always interested me more or less."

"Then I'm sure this Syrinx will convert you even to the *Times*'s opinion when you see it. I shall write to London today for a photograph."

"Very likely I'll admire it," the girl admitted, with a curious glance at Akenside, "but I hope I'll have something more original to say about it than that art critic."

"We may take that for granted, I think," Akenside interrupted maladroitly.

"Of course," Aspasia retorted, "that's just like you. You take everything for granted. Your whole philosophy is one huge assumption. That's why you make no progress intellectually. You are just where you were when you left college, some time in the dark ages before I was born."

"Before light came into the world," Urbano commented gallantly, charmed with the girl's tirade, and amused at Akenside's dumb mortification. Yet his amusement was not malicious, and he wished that his friend could do himself justice in repartee. "But he is Scotch and in love," he reflected; "the combination is always tongue-tied. Poor man! He will think of the right answer when it is too late, and that will make him more miserable still with the sorrow of lost opportunities. It is well, however, that she refused him. It would never have done at all."

As soon as the Professor had gone back to his study, Aspasia asked Akenside the question he expected:

"You knew of that notice in the *Times*?"

"Yes," he replied as coolly as he could, "I saw it last night."

"And yet you didn't tell me? You knew it would interest me."

"It's always best to be quite frank with you, Miss Herrick. I really couldn't speak about it to you. I fear, if I'd been one of Phryne's judges—she wouldn't—you understand?"

"She wouldn't have been acquitted, you mean. That amuses me very much. No, of course not; one never really outgrows one's Puritan upbringing. It's so curious. You work every day of your life among beautiful things, and yet you have no real sense of beauty. There's always that damning undercurrent of moral judgment. Everything beautiful or pleasant must be sinful. How much better it would have been if you had told me at once, without *arrière pensée*! Now I know what you really think of me—not that I care a brass farthing what you think—but it's abominable—insulting."

"Believe me, Miss Herrick, you quite misunderstand me—"

"I never misunderstand anything—"

"Can't you see that between thinking ill of you and not liking to speak about the Syrinx there is a great difference? On my honor, there was no moral censure. Seward's masterpiece, even in that little copy, gave me the most wonderful emotions. There are some things too sacred to be spoken about."

"Sentiment, always sentiment!" Aspasia retorted; "and self-deception. Why can't you be honest? Too sacred, indeed! If I was frank about it, surely you could be frank too. I suppose you think yourself a pure-minded man."

"Without hypocrisy, I hope I am."

"Without hypocrisy! You are crawling with hypocrisy. What a horrid world it is that turns every lovely thing in life to rotteness!" Aspasia let her head droop on her arms and sobbed.

Akenside struggled with a horrible chagrin, and said nothing. Too well he

saw that any further attempt at argument would only make the matter worse. Aspasia always judged by the initial action; for her, explanations were worse than useless. He felt that he had not had perfectly fair play, and yet the girl had pierced his sophistries to the quick. He could not deny the truth of her ultimate analysis. Before her terrible purity of thought and act he felt himself to be a moral leper. Why had he not seen that she was not as other women and met her on her own ground? He should have remembered that, before he boasted of his own delicate reticence, that admirable thing.

"Miss Herrick," he said at last, "I don't think I'll work more today."

"You want me to go?" She looked up sharply, dry-eyed and calm.

"I think perhaps I've been giving you too much to do lately. Why not take an afternoon's holiday?"

"You think I'm hysterical, I suppose. I am not. I won't go. I'm quite able to work; go on, please—"

She took up her pen and began to read over the last sentence Akenside had dictated.

He hesitated, struggling to recall his thoughts.

"Go on, please," Aspasia commanded, her face grown very pale and hard.

Again she had him at a horrible disadvantage. He must strike now, if at all; for the chains were growing insupportable. He could not at her bidding return to his task like a whipped schoolboy. It would be an unpleasant rupture, but he must go through with it.

He looked at Aspasia and was surprised at the change in her expression. She had turned her head towards the folding doors and was listening, open-eyed and with parted lips, to a murmur of voices in Urbano's room. She seemed to have forgotten Robert's existence. Suddenly the Professor called, "Akenside, Akenside!"

Robert rose and went in, closing the door behind him. His head was whirling and he felt a grip as of an iron hand

about his temples. But he pulled himself together and faced the inevitable.

At the end of half an hour, when the visitor had gone out with Urbano, Akenside came back to his own room, where he found Aspasia pacing up and down feverishly. To his relief she was the first to speak.

"Who was that?" The usual question, he thought, was a little hurried, a little eager.

"Maurice Laleham."

"Don't call him Maurice. Where has he been all this time?"

"Is it possible you don't know?"

"If I knew, do you think I would ask?"

"Urbano asked him to go to Pompeii, to make some drawings of the newly discovered frescoes in the House of the Golden Loves."

"The House of the Golden Loves!" Aspasia laughed with gentle mockery. "That's how he debases his genius, is it? Doing work to order, like a house painter. The drawings are for the book, I suppose."

"Yes; does that displease you?"

"Displease me? Of course it does. He's above all these little affairs of pedantry. Is it possible you don't understand what an outrage it is on an artist to set him to work like that? I can't understand why he did it. There must be something wrong somewhere. And yet he is an artist. Oh, I could murder him! I'll tell him so when I see him."

"I must warn the Prefect of Police and get a guard for Mr. Laleham."

Aspasia made a little gesture of despair.

"Don't be so silly. You never will be serious when I'm upset about anything, and this is really very upsetting. Did Maurice ask for me?"

"No."

Aspasia pouted and twitched her nose. Then her eyes grew very large and wonderful, and she seemed to be looking into the infinite, while a faint smile played about her lips.

"Half angel and half devil," Akenside thought, as he watched a thousand expressions chase themselves across

her face in an instant, mirroring her unfathomable complexity of feeling.

"I think, after all," she said at last, "I'll go home. My head aches! But I go because it suits myself, not because you bade me. Remember that, please. By the way, did Mr. Laleham shake hands with you?"

"Of course," Akenside answered, rather mystified.

Aspasia raised her eyebrows and went out, mistress, as ever, of the situation.

XVIII

VERY early in the history of his love for Aspasia, Robert had discovered that passion seemed to have set ajar the doors of the occult. From his boyhood he had believed in another world, accessible through certain hidden gates of knowledge, and more than once he had been tempted to explore those dim regions of the soul. But a jealous fear for his reason had always held him back even when such studies beckoned most alluringly, and with a sigh he set them aside, returning with something of effort to the work in which he found safety and happiness.

But as his enslavement to Aspasia's charm grew more hopeless, he awoke to the knowledge of an uncanny mental development that had come to him without conscious effort, without a thought even of psychic mysteries or of the means by which man may take into his hands the keys of darkness. The discovery left him disturbed and puzzled, for it seemed to cast a doubt upon the reality of his passion, and to discredit one touchstone of love to which he had hitherto trusted. With Sir Thomas Browne he had believed that the lover, try as he will, cannot conjure up the visual image of the beloved. Himself unskilled in love, he had been curious to test that saying in the "Religio Medici," and had been told by men more experienced that it was true.

Almost from the first, however, he had been so possessed by Aspasia's

personality that her image was never long absent from his mind, and although it was usually dim enough to cause him little disquiet, he was startled one night when he lay awake to find that he had gained a new power of mental sight. He was not dreaming or even dozing when the vision came. Gradually out of the nebulous mist that floats before closed eyes, Aspasia's face appeared, at first very dim and faint, but attaining at last to a terrible clearness and reality. He knew it was no dream, but the work of some sixth sense, turned by sympathy and desire into painful accord with the soul and body of the woman he worshiped, until, distance and time annihilated, he could gaze into her eyes and read the emotions that held her in thrall at the moment. Sometimes he saw her asleep; sometimes he shared with her the wakeful passions of the night, but always when their eyes met the *eidolon* faded. At one time her look would be that of an innocent child; at another it was a siren's, more mocking and wickedly beautiful than she ever let herself appear to him, even in her most perverse moods.

Was it a warning, the Puritan in him asked, against a sorceress who would take toll of his soul—a vampire who would drain the best of his life and leave him useless and outworn? Then he would laugh at the conceit that led him to imagine himself as it were the ward of Providence. What was he to merit such interposition? He tried to hold the visions at bay, but the effort seemed only to increase their vividness, and with growing dread he found himself able not only to see Aspasia, but to know in moments of awful insight what she was doing in the hours they spent apart. He wished fervently that Providence, or the devil, had spared him that. Once, in a foolish hope that he might be deceived, he tested one of his intuitions, and with a horrible recoil and shrinking of heart he found that his divination was true. The same day Urbano questioned him about his haunted eyes and warned him against overwork. He laughed bitterly and

replied that he did not work hard enough for his own peace.

The day after he had seen Aspasia in Santa Maria, Akenside went down to Urbano's earlier than usual. On his way he met Laleham, and they went up together to the Professor's study, only to find that he had gone out and would not return till midday.

"I only wanted," Laleham explained, "to look for a moment at my drawings of the House of the Golden Loves, to make a few notes to guide the engraver. Are they here?"

"I'll fetch them," Akenside said, with just a trace of hurry in his voice. "They're in my room."

"Please let me come for them myself," Laleham pleaded, in his beautiful, even voice, while he measured Akenside with deep understanding.

"No, please don't trouble. The table here is larger and more convenient." He hurried through the folding doors, which he closed carefully after him, and turning he faced Aspasia, who was pulling off her gloves.

"Good morning," she said graciously; "you're absurdly early." Then sharply, "Who's there?"

"Mr. Laleham."

She flushed a very little as she inquired:

"Did he ask for me?"

"He scarcely had time."

"Time!" she flung the word back at him. "He had time to say good morning to you, I suppose. Oh, what a clumsy fencer you are—and you thought yourself so diplomatic—"

She took some violets from a vase and tore them to pieces, flinging the petals hither and thither. Then she sat down at her desk and pretended to work.

Without answering, Akenside gathered up the sketches and returned to Laleham. Together they spread the drawings on the table and bent over them, while the artist penciled directions on the margin and explained at what points he wanted the engraver to be particularly careful. When he had finished he went to the window and stood looking idly down upon the street,

talking about trifles easily and pleasantly, but yet without perfect detachment. Akenside, still overstrung and irritable, after a night of mental disquiet, knew that Laleham had something to say that mattered to both of them, and he wished he would say it quickly and give him an excuse to leave the room. He watched his man narrowly, admiring his physique, his commanding height, the superb grace of his movements, his profile, that recalled the famous cameo of the young Nero, the mystery of his shadowed eyes, his lithe suggestion of strength; and as he looked he realized that here was the complement, body and soul, of—another. He could not say the name even to himself; he struggled to hold the idea of that other apart, to annihilate it in his consciousness, for his jealousy forbade the two to exist together even in thought. If only he could blind himself to the future; if only he did not know with such pitiless clearness what must sooner or later befall, what must be very soon! He had believed himself a philosopher; why not accept the inevitable with what grace he could? But when the inevitable is so gallingly unacceptable, poor philosophy has little grace left. As a man, however, he could at least give no sign that he was hurt, and for that much, philosophy could still help him. So he fenced lightly with his adversary, delaying the last stroke with what skill he could command.

From the door leading to the corridor a servant entered and gave a little crumpled note to Akenside.

"May I?" he asked.

Laleham bowed with the faintest mockery of Akenside's old-fashioned punctiliousness.

"Do not go out until I have seen you," Akenside read; "and curse *de ma part* below your breath that young man you are talking to."

"Slightly superfluous," he thought as he crushed the note into his pocket, "but why does she want to see me?" He refused the flattering suggestion that swarmed into his brain, and went on replying, he hardly knew what or how, to Laleham's small talk.

At last the visitor took up his hat and stick. "I think," he said, carelessly touching the drawings, "I've made everything quite clear to the engraver, but those people are such fools. Urbano will be sure to send me proof. I'm going back to Florence tomorrow." Then, when his hand was already on the door, he asked with hardly a trace of emotion, "Is Miss Herrick here? I should like to say good-bye to her."

"She's in the next room—I'll tell her you wish to see her."

"Please."

Amused in spite of himself at his character of major-domo, Akenside went into his own room, where he found Aspasia still pacing the floor restlessly.

"Well?" she said rather wildly.

"You wished to see me?"

"Did I? Oh, yes, I suppose I did." She shrugged her shoulders. "I'm sure I don't know why. Has that young man gone?"

"No. He would like to see you."

"He would? Will you please reply for me—with a horsewhip?"

"Really, Miss Herrick—Aspasia—I"—he faltered and stood dumb.

She looked at him as he stood irresolute before her, and then, with her little contemptuous lift of eyebrows, she said in a low, caressing voice: "I understand. Well, you're wise. You'd only get the worst of it. He's far stronger than you. Yes, I'll see him. No, don't call him in. I'll go to him there. I don't forget that this is *your* room. Professor Urbano would have done what a woman asked, without hesitating."

"I am going out for an hour," Akenside said, recovering his voice.

"Are you? I don't care if you are going out for two, for a hundred, for a thousand hours. You will find me here when you come back. I don't need to be reminded that I'm a slave, thank you."

She swept toward the folding doors and flung them apart with hands outstretched. Akenside, leaving the room by the other entrance, was not quick enough to escape Aspasia's voice exclaiming in its sweetest modulation, "Oh, Maurice, you *dear* person, where

have you been hiding so long?" A double clash of doors shut out the rest, and the pedant, hurrying down the corridor like a man possessed, almost upset Professor Urbano.

"What, Orestes," the Professor cried, after an anxious look into Robert's eyes, "are the Furies after you?"

"Yes, yes! three times three, I think."

"That sounds more like the Muses."

"Oh, damn the Muses and the Fates and the Graces and the whole infernal crew of them! Come out for a walk, Urbano; I want to talk to you."

"With pleasure, Robert. I want to talk to you also. I told you what would happen, my boy. This is the penalty of overwork."

"I wish it had been overwork."

"Ah—so?" The Professor looked at Robert sharply and drew a long breath. "Well, anyway, let's go to the Janiculum. The view will be perfect today, and the air will do you good. It would be wise, however, to put on a hat."

During the first part of their walk Urbano and Robert talked only of trifles, and Akenside grew calmer, although his pulses still drummed like steam hammers and he felt as if Luke's iron crown compressed his temples. As it was growing late the friends gave up the idea of going as far as Garibaldi's monument, and turning aside they climbed the lesser hill to Sant' Onofrio, where, leaning on the parapet of the terrace before the church, they looked across the Campagna towards the Sabine Hills, so clear in the spring sunshine that every crevice and ravine leaped to the eye. Akenside, reminded of Aspasia's rhapsody upon her walk to Cecilia Metella, turned his eyes away to the more prosaic Janiculum and traced the winding road with its groups of wayfarers, who had all the curious air of men walking from a sense of duty. Black-cassocked, shovel-hatted priests in twos and threes doing a "don's grind," and tourists who must admire Garibaldi's statue at close quarters or go home disgraced, although one can see quite enough of it as a tiny speck

from the Pincio—these made up the procession, dull and unpicturesque enough, but for some German seminarists, whose flaming robes struck a bright note against the hillside and reminded Akenside of far-off days in a Scottish university, when he too wore the scarlet gown.

"Little cardinals in embryo," he said, pointing out the group of students to Urbano.

"It is as near the red hat as most of them will get, poor boys. Let them enjoy their butterfly hour while they may! The days of the black habit will last far longer. Do you know, Akenside, although my sympathies are so strongly clerical, the priesthood in some respects is to me an inexplicable mystery, a thing impossible."

Robert gave his friend a quick glance of understanding. "To me it was no mystery until—well, the inevitable happened."

"And for you the inevitable is the impossible. Is not that so?"

"More and more impossible, I fear. I only wish I had strength enough to reconcile myself to facts. But there is always a return to vain and foolish hopes. One moment I see the absurdity of it all, the shipwreck I would make of what matters most to me in life if my dream came true; the next, I return to my fool's paradise and chase the futile ideal round the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, knowing that it is not worth the quest and yet maddened by that very knowledge into a more eager pursuit. I erred at the very start and there is no reparation. Every step now leads nearer to destruction."

"Had you been a different man, Robert," Urbano replied after a long silence, "I would have laughed at you and bidden you fling morbid distrust aside. I would have told you to go forward boldly, confident that you must win in the end. But being what you are, you must not think of that. I know very little. I only guess from stray words of yours and random intuitions of my own, but I believe I have come near the mark. Somehow, I

don't ask how, you have bartered away your independence; the strong hand that alone would have insured happiness in this adventure is no longer yours. You were dazzled; I do not blame you. And you yielded before the battle—it is always a battle—had even begun. Now nothing remains for you but to be dragged at the conqueror's chariot wheels. Venus Victrix is very merciless, and that is not the fate your friends desire for you."

"I know, I know," Robert exclaimed impatiently, "and yet there are moments when I don't care what ignominy I endure, if only—"

"Believe me, Robert, you do *not* know. No man in your plight ever does. He sees a little unpleasantness purchasing a great joy and he believes the joy will more than compensate. But such satisfaction is utterly elusive. One day or two at the most would have seen the end."

"But the memory of those days, would it not have been worth everything?"

"Not to a slave bound by irrevocable fetters. To a free man afterwards, yes, perhaps; but that freedom is not for you. You have not the temperament; you would have been haunted by misgivings born of your upbringing. You are not a Puritan, exactly, and yet you are. No, you would have done what you thought honor demanded, and in this case there would, I am sure, have been no choice for you, even if you yourself had wished otherwise. But your sword arm is already crippled; you would only live in a hell of exactions and contradictions, of scorn and neglect; you would see everything you worshiped belied, everything you held dear trampled under foot. Had your strength not been sapped it need not have been so; a strong man, who had won respect and could keep a firm hand on the reins, need even now fear nothing, provided his purse was long enough. But, my dear boy, your day is over, and the sooner you make up your mind to it the better. Take your courage in both hands and cut this passion out of your

life altogether. Cut out what inspires it as well."

"It is so easy to give advice, Urbano!"

"I know it is, and I know, too, what you would say. But believe me, what you fear won't happen. You are not the be-all and the end-all. Existence was possible and I suppose tolerantly pleasant before you made things easier. It will be the same again. Think well over this. Now let's turn back, and as we go we'll talk of something happier. By the bye, this morning's post brought me the photograph of that wonderful thing of Seward's. Here it is. Look at it and say again, if you dare, that sculpture is a lost art— Why, what's the matter! Are you ill?"

"No, not in the least ill. Yes, yes, it's wonderful," Robert cried confusedly, "a masterpiece—overwhelming!"

"But you are not looking at the picture—"

"I don't need to. I know the thing quite well—"

"How? Did you see it in London? But you couldn't. I hear it's quite new. He finished it very quickly. You have been out of England since last July."

"I've seen a small copy by the artist himself."

"A copy? This is tremendously interesting. Why didn't you tell me? Where is it?"

"I'm not at liberty to tell you where."

They had stopped and stood facing each other, both fiercely excited. Urbano almost snatched the photograph from Robert and examined it carefully. Suddenly he gave a quick exclamation as if he had made a discovery, and he looked at the head of the statue still more closely. Then without comment he put the picture away, and remarked carelessly:

"We have been here longer than I thought. I must turn back; but you had better go on; for you really ought not to think of work today. You take my advice like a wise man."

Robert shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps you're right," he cried, and they parted.

But he returned to the Via Montebello a quarter of an hour after Urbano.

XIX

AKENSIDE, on entering his room at Urbano's, was amused to find that the impulse which detached itself most clearly from the raveled web in his brain was one of curiosity. In what mood? he asked himself as he opened the door; in what mood? And for how long? He knew that it would be useless to try to work, but he might at least pretend. Anything he might do would be worthless, but no matter, it would pass the time a saner man would have taken care to spend elsewhere. Tomorrow he could tear up the rubbish.

He found himself at once in a subdued atmosphere of industry, very still, save for the racing of a pen and the occasional rustle of a turned leaf. On his desk lay the first twenty pages of a translation he had wanted for several days. He looked at the opening with only a faint interest, but in spite of himself he read on, and very soon he became quite absorbed in the subject matter before him. But he was not blind to the manner. "Admirable," he said without knowing he spoke aloud. "Most admirably done."

The willowy figure at the writing table beside the window did not turn round, but a voice very gentle and exquisitely modulated asked irrelevantly: "Will you please get me Overbeck's 'Schriftquellen'?" It's on the shelf behind you."

Akenside fancied that the voice was slightly agitated, and when he laid the book beside Aspasia, he looked at her earnestly and saw that she seemed strangely flushed and excited. Her color, never more than a suggestion, was more delicately accentuated than he had ever seen it, her eyes brilliant with an uncanny daredeviltry. Murmuring her thanks she gave Robert a moment's sidelong glance so bewitching

in its perversity, so alluring in its remote elfishness, that Akenside turned hastily away lest prudence should desert him altogether. Aspasia's glance made him murderous, for he knew that it was not for him. He sat down and began to trace some aimless notes on the margin of the manuscript.

The girl heard the scratch of his pen. She turned quickly, and laying one perfectly modeled arm, bare to the elbow, along the back of her chair, she pressed her chin upon the dimpling flesh and exclaimed jealously: "What have I done? Anything terrible?"

"No, I'm merely making some notes for my own use. It's delightfully written. Thank you so much. You're wonderful!"

"Don't be so absurd." She returned abruptly to her task, and silence again fell between them for a time.

Suddenly, without looking round, Aspasia exclaimed:

"Mr. Akenside."

"Aspasia."

"Don't call me Aspasia, please."

"Not if you dislike it."

"I should think not, indeed!" She raised one deprecating shoulder and bent over her work anew. In a minute or two she spoke again:

"Don't you think me very good and diligent?"

"Diligent, certainly. I don't know about good."

"You mean I wasn't good this morning."

"I remember nothing about this morning."

"Very unflattering of you, then, and almost insulting." She wrote a line or two more and then added: "I was in a very great rage."

"Always a perilous thing—for beauty."

"Is that meant to be unpleasant?"

"Not in the least, believe me."

"Then it was very clumsy. I hate lumbering compliments. Some people always say the wrong thing. It may be their form of genius; it's not a kind I recognize. Good heavens, I was in a rage! I am in a worse one now." Again she shot that strange, maddening

glance at Akenside. "But I mustn't idle," the look changed to one of adorably insincere demureness. She opened the "Schriftquellen" and hunted for a reference which seemed to elude her. Presently she shut the book and stood up.

"Would it cause a revolution if I went at half-past four?"

"I should rather think it would—if you mightn't."

"Thank you, that's awfully sweet of you; and for you, it's almost witty. I mayn't want to go, but I'm in a perfect fever expecting a message. If I don't get one, I'll be furious. I want someone, he, she or it, to do something I want. If they don't I'll murder them."

"Fortunately there's no capital punishment in Italy. By the bye, have you thrown that revolver into the Tiber? If not, give it to me, please."

"You absurd person, it was only a paper weight. How you fly to melodrama! Oh! At last—"

Aspasia rushed at the servant who entered just then, and she almost tore the note out of his hand. Akenside thought her fingers trembled a little as she broke the seal.

"It's all right!" she exclaimed in suppressed excitement. "I may go now, mayn't I? Good night."

Akenside thought he had never seen her so elusive, so spiritual as she appeared when she glided from the room. It was a transfiguration. She seemed like a being on the verge of a new world as she went out murmuring something, half defiantly, that might or might not have been meant for Robert to hear. For a long time he sat resting his head on his hands while the cryptic words beat themselves through his brain. What did she mean? Anything or nothing, or was it merely a tiny barbed shaft shot for his torment and her pleasure, a little feminine revenge for one of his greatest blunders? "Thank God, he, she or it has no morals!"

If it meant nothing it could not have been more subtly contrived to give him pain. But he was a conceited ass; she

was too much preoccupied even to think of him, still less to devise tortures for him. It was bad luck, however, that tonight his intuitions were at their keenest, and told him in spite of himself things he did not wish to know. The abyss of his own mind opened before him. He gazed into it fascinated, yet loathing what he saw there and appalled that these imaginings should be the creatures of his soul. They were not; he disowned them fiercely; they were some foul spawn of hell let loose for a little to try him. He strove to rally himself to drive them out. No priest could help him here; of such demons every man must be his own exorcist.

Toward six o'clock he roused himself and went to the hotel to dress. He was dining with Urbano, the Cardinal and one or two others who formed the inner circle of their life in Rome. Very reluctantly he returned to the Professor's house, and once on the way he stopped, tempted to go back and send an excuse. He wanted to be alone, yet at the same time he feared solitude, and that dread in the end sent him forward. During dinner Robert made so brave a pretense to be himself that Urbano, who was watching his friend with some anxiety, flattered himself that his counsel had borne fruit.

But Akenside, for all the superficial gaiety of his manner, knew that hell was about him. No torture that he had endured was like unto this torture, and the more he struggled to combat it for morbid imagination, the more the pains of certainty bit him. Blame himself as he might for a mean suspicion, and he hated himself heartily for every unbidden thought, he could not doubt his intuitions, already too surely proved in their disquieting accuracy. In vain he told himself that his overstrung nerves had built up a fabric of evidence that nothing could justify; as surely did his demon mock him with reminders of things he had divined with slighter shreds of proof. It told him that his self-deception now lay in the desire to deny what he wished impossible, and that what he

knew he knew and must accept with what grace he could.

As he walked home from Urbano's he began to refine upon his torment and to trace it to its ultimate source. The result was unflattering; for he found that it sprang from the crudest jealousy. He had believed for a moment that he was moved by a very lofty solicitude for an ideal that he would have saved at any cost from violation, but he discovered, on stricter scrutiny of himself, that he would have thought less of the ideal than of his own victory, had victory lain within his grasp. He saw the whole scope and meaning of his action during the past months, the unreasoning obedience to what he had sometimes called sentiment, sometimes amiable weakness, sometimes—oh, mockery!—love. He had even been so lost to the sense of justice as to believe himself generous; now he understood that he had been guided by the grossest selfishness. He could not bear to see what he desired pass to another.

With the formulated thought came a keener visualization, a deeper agony. The Furies seized and tore him, and flicked his already lacerated self-love with their snaky whips. He writhed at the thought of his weakness. His weakness! There was the crux of the whole matter. Had he been strong, as Urbano had told him, he might have won; with courage to resist in smaller things he might have gone on to conquer in greater. But he had feared a moment's unpleasantness; he had yielded in the lighter encounters because he shrank from little storms that after all would have been weathered in an hour or two had he kept a firm hand on the tiller. Had he only been wise enough to employ masterly inactivity as well. Too clearly he saw how that strategy had been understood and used with a deft subtlety that led to conquest even at the moment when it seemed most remote. He lived through that disturbing scene again; he saw himself, challenged to the impossible, falter and fail, bereft even of resource enough to turn the difficulty aside with a laugh and a pointed phrase,

the one unfailing weapon against such unreasoning moods as that which had placed him in this snare. But latterly, as the affair grew more serious, he had become more miserably tongue-tied. It was the just Nemesis of one who had voluntarily sold himself into slavery. He was no man; the man had won, and he deserved to win. But desert did not make victory more palatable to the vanquished.

Then Robert's mind, reaching out to further tortures, began to forecast the future. Not the remote future of desolation that was now inevitable, but the more insistent fact of tomorrow and what it would bring. It might, of course, bring nothing. That was very possible, to one who went and came with every impulse or inclination. He almost hoped it might be so; it would be the easiest way out of the coil; he laughed bitterly to think how he always rushed at the easiest. Yes, a sudden disappearance would be very desirable. Sight, speech, association held nothing but misery; he could find no comfort even in routine, although even that must be taken up again, if so the Fates ordained.

And yet, these difficulties might exist only in fancy. So exceptional was the character with which he had to deal that the way might be quite simple. After all, this would be but an incident, one vivid moment in the sequence of experience, seized, tested and then set aside, perhaps forever, whether it had meant much or little. Regrets would not be suffered to intrude. Akenside longed for a like freedom from that servitude.

As the night wore on he was beset by two questions flung at him by his mocking familiar. It was useless to tell himself that they were no business of his, that he was a subject fit only for the mental pathologist; the voice would not be stilled. "Now at this moment, very likely," sneered the demon, answering his own first query and laughing to see his victim writhe. To the other question the demon gave no reply, for of his ancient skill, learned amid the shrieking shades of Tartarus,

he knew that the tormented mind would need no prompting to screw the agony to the most exquisite pitch. Robert himself dared not answer, but a strange flurry of inconsequent thought drove him back to those earlier days in Rome, when in happy expectancy he had prepared a place for—he knew not what. After the first day he had never gone there again. He wondered now if that self-imposed absence counted as another of his blunders.

Before him rose the little Syrinx, with its ineffable allurements, its strange revelation of the mysteries of body and soul, its dual kinship with the world of yesterday and of today, and he sank down trembling at the knowledge of all it symbolized. And once more he heard, as in that summer gloaming, starlit and rose-perfumed, the murmured invocation: "O Aphrodite, Queen of Heaven, be near me—yet not too near!" Again, too, he heard the sonorous music of Sappho's verse, but the words that haunted him tonight were not those of the great ode, with its lofty ecstasy, but the last stanza of another song, as terrible as it is untranslatable, that sings the strange swooning rapture of a passion unto death.

XX

NEXT morning, through the spiteful persistence of a Roman spring down-pour, Akenside, leaden-eyed and leaden-footed, dragged himself to Professor Urbano's house. He had no inclination to work, and he would gladly have stayed away, but an overmastering desire to know the best or the worst drove him forward. That he would know it he hardly doubted. The best he could expect would be that one place should be empty, and for that he almost hoped. And yet, although absence would bring certainty, he knew that he would have it otherwise; for he had begun to find a strange, almost scientific, curiosity in the problem Fate had proposed to him, and he would be disappointed if there were no Sphinx to challenge him once more with her

enigma. He had come so far on the way toward truth that he must tread it to the end. True, the Sphinx might baffle him at the last moment; nothing was more probable, for her subtlety in evasion left him always on the brink of the unexpected. That was the spiritual precipice down which this juggling witch of a later day hurled her victims, and it was in its very nature more to be dreaded than the sheer descent overlooking ancient Thebes. For the victims of the Sphinx of old times died of their failure; hers of a later day had to survive the consciousness of their disgrace. The Theban Sphinx herself could not outlive defeat; for this other no defeat was possible. Whatever befell, she would always remain the world's challenger and victor. Sufficient to herself in everything she did, she drew from that a moral support that defied question and put the questioner to shame.

Fortunately there would be no open question. Robert recoiled at the thought of that insolence, but none the less he knew how much he had at stake and what he must suffer if he lost this wager of the spirit. If the agony of last night had been nothing but the creation of his own baser consciousness, the unworthy offspring of desire denied, then he must go forth with a worse brand than Cain's upon his soul, to wander forever in spiritual outer darkness. For he would have murdered the fairest thing he had ever known, fairest in spite of many failings and perversities, and for sins against beauty there is no atonement. Yet with the thought came the paradox, whimsical and very comforting, that if he had not erred, his ideal was still possible to him; even love might still be possible. The doctrine would at one time have seemed heterodox; now he hugged it to him as the most precious orthodoxy.

As Robert entered his room, the sight of the empty place by the window, although it surprised him not at all, brought a fierce spasm of dismay. It might mean everything or nothing; it was not what he wanted. He looked

at the clock; he was already late, and where work was in question Aspasia had always kept faith with time. She had told him once, with her most enchanting raillery, that she could only be faithful to the indefinable when she was paid for it. He had replied that it was fortunate man was definable.

"Are you quite sure?" she had asked. "I have never found a satisfactory definition, and after all, who would marry except for money or position?" Then after a pause she added, with all the wisdom of the ages in her eyes, "By marriage I don't mean what *you* mean."

He smiled in spite of himself to recall the little passage at arms, one of the many that had made their working hours delightful. Urbano heard and looked at her with gentle irony, though he said nothing at the time. Afterwards he recalled the remark, adding: "What a mercenary witch it is! Beware; you are a rich man."

"As a far richer man," Robert parried, "take your own advice, please, with interest."

"Needless, needless," Urbano said. "You forget I'm a graybeard."

But that was in the very early days, before the Professor had formed any conclusions, or come to the point of serious advice. He had never mentioned the words again, but that was not because he had forgotten them.

Half an hour passed. Akenside tried to lose himself in his work, but every task he attempted seemed impossibly difficult. He had lost all power of concentration, except on the one obsession. On that he refined and refined again, analyzing, questioning, rebuking himself. Suddenly he sprang up as though he had recalled something he had forgotten, and turning round to the shelves behind him he chose a tall white folio, the fascinating French biographical dictionary of Bayle. There he looked up the note in which Diogenes Laertius's story is discussed with so much erudition, only to leave the question, as curious erudition so often does, a question still. He took up the Greek text again, and be-

came so absorbed in it that he did not hear the door open and close. It was provoking that the author said so little and suggested so much. "If only," he said aloud, "he had told one more! And yet, how can one explain an intuition?"

"Why seek the impossible? Remember what Plato says about its being a disease of the soul. What's the trouble now? No, do let me look, please."

He tried to shut the book, but a delicate white hand was already between the leaves, and the volume was gently pulled away from him. "Oh, that's what you are reading! It's a very strange story, is it not? But, of course, it's nonsense, or at the best a lucky guess. Quite Delphic in its hazard of truth."

"Oh, of course it's all rubbish," he replied, meeting her tired eyes with a questioning look that the girl returned without flinching. He thought her pale and a little weary, but that might be only his overstrained fancy.

"Why do you agree with me?" she cried petulantly. "I'm sure you believe it all. You're absurdly credulous, like all unimaginative people." Then, before he could answer, she went on hurriedly: "I'm sorry to be so late, but I had a headache this morning. I was at the Costanzi last night and the play was very exciting—'La Figlia di Jorio.' I must be growing old, when a little fictitious emotion wears me out. It's so long since I've had any dissipation, I seem to have forgotten how to stand it."

"The cure must be more dissipation, then."

She made a little wry face. "I don't know. I wonder, is it worth while?"

"Surely every sensation is worth while."

"Sensations—don't talk to me of sensations! They always come at the wrong time. I did so look forward to the play last night—that was the first mistake. I expected to be quite thrilled, and I was for a moment, perhaps, but it was all superficial. I had no real emotions. Oh, I am dead! I

am dead! I shall never really feel anything again, I know. When I awoke this morning I burst into tears. Nothing is worth having. Everything seems to elude one the moment one tries to seize it. I know why. I come of a race that has exhausted life. My ancestors have left me only desires, without the power of enjoyment. Why do you look so horrified?"

"It is horrible to see how you can explain yourself."

"Is it? Yes, your Puritan mind doesn't like that. You would rather have me able to deceive myself, to believe that the unreal is real, or, better still, to know nothing about myself at all. You like the happy, unconscious, innocent bread-and-butter miss, packed with shams, going blindly on the way her grandmother went through life to death."

"It seems on your own showing to be death in either case."

"Oh, you are unsympathetic! You will never take me seriously."

"Believe me, I do take you seriously, perhaps too seriously."

"Do you?" Her eyes grew hard and scornful. She turned away abruptly and began to move the papers on her desk. "I know exactly what your sympathy is worth. You are like all sentimental people, absolutely unfeeling. And now I think we have wasted quite enough time over this."

A sudden drooping of the girl's figure brought Robert to her side. All the color had gone out of her face and the light had almost left her eyes. She clutched the table and stood swaying. Robert caught her, but she tried to pull herself together and drew sharply aside.

"Don't touch me!" she commanded. "I hate to be touched. I will not be touched."

Ignoring the order, he took her hands firmly in his, and without further protest Aspasia allowed him to put her into the most comfortable chair in the room. Still pale and with a far-away look in her eyes, she lay back and smiled wearily, her look the

faint ghost of yesterday's adorable devilry.

Robert poured out wine. "Drink this, please," he said carelessly, avoiding any suggestion of a command. "It is good for fictitious emotions."

"I could throw something at you," she threatened, smiling faintly, "but it's too much trouble." She drank the wine and her color began to return. Then she closed her eyes and let her head sink deeper into the cushions. Gradually her limbs relaxed. She sighed once or twice, her breathing became deep and regular and Robert saw that she slept. She reminded him of the sleeping Fury wrongly called the Medusa in the Museo Nazionale, and he laughed to think what a chance of further fame Seward or someone else was missing. But this phase would never be given to a vulgar world. It was his, all that he might call his own, and he would keep sacred forever the fleeting moment of beauty. He bent down and kissed her on the lips, careless of the consequences should she awaken, but Aspasia did not move. He could have spent ages gazing at her, as she lay, so sinuously graceful, so utterly desirable, so perversely suggestive of innocence and experience wedded yet eternally divorced, but he knew that to look steadily at one who sleeps often brings an unpleasant awakening. He sat down and began to write letters of no importance, merely to pass the time; for serious work was impossible.

Urbano came in and stopped suddenly at the door, his face one amused question.

"Headache," Robert explained, answering his friend's look, and the Professor went out softly. It was annoying that Urbano had seen what he had seen.

For about an hour Akenside amused himself with trifles. He wrote; he sorted papers; sometimes he read a little. It was all to no purpose, but it passed the time until Aspasia should awake. Suddenly, without opening her eyes, the girl spoke:

"You kissed me just now."

"I did."

"It was unpardonable."

"I am unrepentant."

"You deserve not to be spoken to for a week."

"I deserve better than that."

"So you think. It's for me to say. All the same, I don't know why, I'm going to forgive you." She opened her eyes and looked at him with a sweet friendliness that he had not seen for many days. Her weariness had almost vanished. She sprang up, and taking a little antique mirror from one of Urbano's cabinets, she looked at herself critically.

"I'm still rather a wreck," she cried, frowning at her reflection, "and I'm famishing. Don't you think it's time for lunch?"

"Shall we go down to Sorra Nina?"

"Oh, no; not there. What do you say to Aragno's, among the happy *bourgeoisie*? The middle classes will be reassuring in my present mood. I want to study respectability. It is the only safeguard, when one has got the better of every illusion. I'm utterly disillusioned. Nothing will mean anything to me again. But I can still be splendidly conventional. Why not ask Professor Urbano to come with us? He will be a protection."

"Am I not sufficient?"

"Scarcely, I think. You are uncertain. You would be almost dangerous, if you had any courage. You would like to do things you don't dare. No, I must have someone I can trust."

They went into Urbano's room and invited him. "I shall be charmed," he declared. "You know, I have just bought a motor car; it is coming around now. The rain is over. We must have our first drive together, and after lunch we shall go out to Frascati."

Aspasia clapped her hands. "That will be heavenly," she cried. "This lazy man was too slack to bring his car to Italy, just because of a few silly formalities. I have regretted it every day. Your car will be a godsend. I hate machinery usually, but in this form it's tolerable. Nothing else could distract me so well. You know I'm so like Hamlet today."

"How?" the Professor inquired, with a puzzled air. "'These customary suits of solemn black?'" and he looked at her dress.

"No, no. 'Man delights not me.'"

"Nor woman neither?" Akenside finished the quotation with a laugh.

"By man I mean mankind generally. I ignore mere distinctions of sex. They were useful only to bring about the Fall, and to make humanity interesting for a little. But one outlives that illusion with the others. Fortunately dress, food and motor cars remain."

"But surely we owe dress to the Fall?" Urbano asked.

"If you can dignify the fig leaf with the sacred name of dress, perhaps," Aspasia pouted, "but as an enthusiast in sculpture, Signor Urbano, you, I'm sure, hate that ostrich device of the evil minded."

"Don't be too hard on our first parents, signorina."

"Why shouldn't I? I have nothing to gain from them. They are as useless as posterity."

"You are exquisitely practical."

"I am always practical. Only fools are impractical. The world is for those who know how to take advantage of it. I never scruple to take every advantage. Sometimes the result is disappointing. Then I put the failure aside and go on with what is left."

"Here, then, is one of the things that remain. How do you like my car?" They had reached the door, where Urbano's chauffeur was just drawing up.

Aspasia gave a little cry of delight. "Oh, it's splendid, really thrilling! I hope it doesn't break down. You must teach me to drive. You can't think how I worship speed. I shall ruin you in fines."

"Have you ever exceeded the limit?"

"Yes, once," she shot a queer little glance at Akenside, "but that was in the dark ages. I've forgotten all about it. It was quite unimportant."

"Won't you get in?" Urbano asked, holding open the door of the car. "I hope the drive will cure your headache."

"How did you know I'd got one?"

she asked as the Professor took his place beside her.

"Akenside told me. I came in when you were dreaming. Do you know, you reminded me of the 'Sleeping Fury' in the *Nazionale*."

"How sweet of you to say that! Mr. Akenside, isn't it delicious of Professor Urbano? You would never have thought of that, and yet you call yourself an archæologist."

Akenside bit his lip. "I did think of it," he protested, losing his head.

"But you didn't say so. Oh, how slow you are! But never mind. If it occurred to you both it's rather too obvious a compliment to be worth anything to me. Now do tell the man to drive on, please, for just now I want lunch more even than flattery."

She lay back in her seat, very much the great lady, looking about her with mysterious, experienced eyes, and gave herself up to the silent enjoyment of the drive.

Only once she spoke.

"I don't think I want Aragno's after all; let it be the Café Colonna, please. This car makes me want to see some pretty dresses."

"Very improper," Urbano said laughing, "but let us go there all the same."

XXI

AFTER the luncheon at the Colonna, Akenside, having another engagement, left Urbano to take Aspasia to Frascati. He did not see her again that day, but the next morning she came in radiant, perfectly in love with the car and the drive.

"It's very unwise of Urbano," she said. "I shall never be good and diligent again. I shall always want to go out for a spin, when we are working. But the bad man wouldn't let me take the wheel, although I was awfully sweet to him. He said fearful things about the ditch and sudden death, and refused quite firmly."

"My dear girl, he knows how valuable you both are to modern scholarship."

"You *are* stupid. I think you're almost insulting. What have I to do with modern scholarship? How dare you speak of that dull thing and me together! And I am not your dear girl. I won't be called names. I stamp my fist," she cried, with one of the quaint departures from English that made her speech fascinating, "and I warn you that I don't belong to you in any way." She gave three imperious taps on the table as she spoke.

"Stamp my fist' is good," Akenside laughed.

"Pedant!" she exclaimed in mock fury. "I suppose it's not English or not grammar or some nonsense like that. You will remind me next that it's not correct to say, 'He told me good morning.' You say 'bade,' I suppose. We always 'tell' each other good morning."

"Who are 'we'?"

"My friends. I think I'll go back to London. I wonder if the Polite Outcasts are still alive? They don't write. And yet, perhaps, I'd find most of them dull. One advances. Still, some of them were wonderful, quite the most wonderful people I've met; except perhaps one, who doesn't count now."

She leaned her chin on her hands and seemed to look into infinity.

"What are you thinking, unfathomable woman?" Akenside said after a pause.

"I am pondering deeply. Do you know, Seward's in Rome. Yesterday, after we left the Colonna, we saw him in the Piazza Venezia. Of course Urbano wanted to stop, but I wouldn't hear of it. I passed with a very distant bow; it is all he deserves, after inspiring such rubbish about me as that silly gush in the *Times*. I've no more to say to low Bohemians. I'm going to acquire a tremendous reputation for austere virtue. It will be such a beautiful mask for one's excesses. A cloak for one's sins is the most ingenious of Scriptural ideas; only people don't take it the right way. They regard the cloak as another vice, whereas it's really essential virtue. Oh, virtue's the only wear!"

"What a pity our first parents didn't think so."

"Life would have been duller; unless they'd put on virtue afterward instead of fig leaves. But don't be flippant. It's all very well for me; it's not natural to you. At the best you're only an echo, when you try to catch my tone. And imitations are always so weak. I'd much rather you'd hold a Covenanting conventicle on me and tell me all you feel about me, hot from your heart. You'd be so much more amusing, so much honester. I can say all the flippant things ever so much better than you. I know all your flippancies already, but your 'plain dealing' would be quite fresh. If only you'd had the sense to play the true-blue Covenanter, unspoiled from your moors and moss-bogs, heavens, how you would have interested me! Remember, I say had you *played* the Covenanter. Had you *been* one I couldn't have endured you for a moment. But I can't resist a good pose. Pose is everything. In life it is only the unrealities that count. The realities are so crude."

"Come along, Mephistopheles in petticoats; be diligent if you can't be good. Urbano was saying he hopes to finish the book in ten days."

"Oh, dash the book! Why should I have to work? Very well, let's go on. Shall I never have any luck, I wonder?"

"Shall I tell you an old Scots rhyme said to encourage idle little girls?" Akenside said, laughing. "It goes:

"Be busy, my Lizzie,
And ye'll get the Laird o' Drum;
But if ye be na busy
Ye'll get but his second son."

Aspasia pouted. "How vulgar! I don't want the Laird o' Drum. I'm sure if he's like the name of his estate he'd be a very monotonous person. But the last part is hopeful. Second sons are often very delightful people. If only they had more money! The law of primogeniture is annoying. It limits one's choice."

"I might have known you could be trusted to turn the poor old jingle upside down and to find its encourage-

ment and its warning just where they weren't intended."

"Popular sayings are invariably stupid except when they are immoral. All the same, today I suppose I must try to deserve the Laird o' Drum." She sighed and for the next hour or two they talked no more moral philosophy.

The approaching end of their work brought Akenside face to face with the problem of the future. It was not acutely distressing; for his relations with Aspasia had become far more endurable since the supreme crisis. Things might very well go on as they were indefinitely. If he had been quite sane, he would have let them drift, but still, in spite of no encouragement, in spite of the calm friendliness that had grown up between him and the girl, there were days and nights when he saw visions and dreamed dreams. But there was always the unexpected, and of that the girl was past mistress. Who could tell? So he waited impatiently for opportunity.

That came from Aspasia herself. One morning Urbano had taken her in the car to the Borghese, as he wished to consult her about the date of a little Eros. She came back after lunch in her most gracious mood, her color delicately heightened, her eyes dancing, and very pleased with herself because she had scored over the elderly scholar.

"Of course the thing's spurious," she cried. "Urbano must have been blind not to see that before. I wonder where were his eyes? But he gave me a lovely lunch, and we drank champagne—one of the purest pleasures I know."

"Be busy, my Lizzie—" Akenside began in mock-heroic style.

"Oh, do shut up that disgraceful plebeian rhyme! Lizzie indeed! Do I look like a kitchen maid?" She flew to her refuge, the little mirror, and held it now to one side of her face, now to the other, as if she were testing the symmetry of her features, while she tilted her chin bewitchingly and made sidelong critical eyes at herself in the glass. Satisfied, she laid it down and

stood silent for a moment before she spoke.

"Mr. Akenside," she began, with just the nearest approach to shyness he had ever seen in her, "you never come to see me at the Via Capo le Case. Am I too disreputable?"

"No, too respectable."

She laughed merrily. "I suppose that shows very nice gentlemanly feeling in you, and all the rest of it, but I wish you'd waive that now and then. Do you want me very much this afternoon?"

"No—that is, yes; of course I always want—well, don't let's get into polite quagmires. If you wish to go, you may. Our work is finished; we can afford to idle a little."

"Very well. Will you come to tea at my rooms? Signora Vedova Ricci will chaperon you, if you're afraid."

"Please lock Signora Vedova Ricci up! Yes, I'll come with pleasure."

"Follow me in an hour, then. I'll give you real Russian tea nicer than anything you ever tasted."

"To celebrate your victory over Urbano?"

For a moment she seemed startled. "My what? Oh, that paltry little score! You're always thinking of your beastly work"—and with her most mocking and mischievous smile she was gone.

When Robert reached the Via Capo le Case, he found Aspasia in a clinging gown of pale blue, cut low at the neck and cunningly contrived to accentuate the curves of her beautiful bust and the harmonious undulations of her limbs. Beside her was a little tea table set with a samovar and glasses *à la russe*. As they sat down he looked at her with frank admiration and noted every dainty allurement, from the simple arrangement of her hair, to the perfect sandaled foot, thrust forward, with ever so little suggestion of coquetry, just enough to show the delicate turn of her ankle.

"You are very Greek today," he cried.

"I suppose you should know," she replied reflectively, laying her fore-

finger lightly on her chin. "You're what they call 'an authority,' aren't you? Personally I distrust authorities. They're so one-sided, so much the victims of other authorities. You great scholars"—she suggested her inverted commas with provokingly ironical sweetness—"live in mortal dread of each other, don't you?"

"That's the penalty, I fear, of being professionally well informed."

"Exactly. The only real authorities are the naturally and inevitably well informed, the intelligent people who read and remember, but who don't trouble to specialize—vile phrase! I respect only the knowledge that appears in a higher kind of society small talk. One hears it among the best sort of artists, seldom among the so-called literary people. As for pedants, they are the lowest organisms on the scale of culture. And they imagine themselves the highest. You, for instance, think you are full of culture."

"No man was ever yet full of culture." It was Robert's turn to indicate inverted commas. "Culture is not a thing to be packed into a sack. It is an efflorescence."

She knew that he had caught her, and her eyelids drooped with a demure affectation of humility. For once she had no pointed retort ready, but not to be cheated of the last word, she sought refuge in mystification:

"That is just what people like you would say."

"You are a little mystagogue."

"Am I? I don't understand what you mean. Two slices of lemon?" She looked up with her hand poised over Robert's glass.

"Two, please. A mystagogue is a person who—"

"Oh, I don't want a lecture about mystagogues. We shall quarrel very soon, and that would be unpleasant—for you."

"Where did you get that charming samovar?"

"To tell you that would be to tell you about my past, and that would be indiscreet. The only fascination you have for me is your ignorance of my

history. It's amusing to think of the wrong ideas you have about me."

"Please amuse me by telling me some of them."

"They would cease to be amusing if I did. Besides, you would deny them indignantly, and then I should know I'd guessed right. Even if you didn't deny them, I'd know; for you would change color and look furious. Besides, the past doesn't matter to anybody."

"Then tell me about your future."

"Have I one? I often wonder. I hope, if I have, I'll have heaps of money, and if there must be a husband in the background that he'll be someone I need never see, or only see as little as I choose. But I must have money and freedom, my own friends and a perfect dressmaker. I'm sure I'll be quite conventional, at least to the eyes of superficial people, and a most virtuous wife. I could be magnificently faithful to anyone who didn't exact fidelity. He musn't expect love."

"That might come unawares?"

"No, that happens only in the most fictitious fiction. You are still as primitive as when I first met you. You do very little credit to my training."

"But where is this exceptional husband to be found?"

"Who knows? Some American millionaire perhaps. The Americans understand the art of working for women and of talking to them. Some of them know also how to let them alone. They are a practical nation. By the way, he would have to buy me Seward's Syrinx, the original statue."

"That would be easy."

"Certainly not; it is priceless. You're very uncomplimentary, and it's plain you don't know much about sculpture, but of course you're an authority," and she poured herself out some more tea.

Akenside looked round the room as if he were searching for something. "Well, teach me a little now, please," he entreated. "I don't see the tiny Syrinx anywhere. Mayn't I look at it again; or is it hiding from profane eyes?"

"Do you deserve to see it? You don't, of course, but as I intend to be quite sweet to you today, you shall. It's in my room. I'll fetch it."

She was gone longer than he had expected, and he knew very well that her mirror had detained her. What did Aspasia's strange words mean? he asked himself. Was it mere coquetry, or had she guessed his purpose and was she telling him the only possible terms of surrender? Anyhow, in his present mood he was ready to take every risk. When she returned he would cast the die.

Close at hand was a little bookcase that reflected the exquisite eclecticism of Aspasia's taste. He looked at the titles of the books with dotting approval and singled out the small Horace he had given her that day on the steps of Trinità dei Monte. He would look once more at the playful dedication he had written on the flyleaf. With a hand not quite so steady as he could have wished, he pulled out the volume and opened it eagerly, only to thrust it back the next moment with a suppressed cry of pain, as though the thing had burned him.

The inscription had been cut carefully away. Only the date remained to mock him.

Everything seemed blurred and whirling when Aspasia returned with the casket. Through the mist of his emotion Robert watched her lift the lovely figure from its resting place and set it on the table between them. She caressed it for a moment and turned it slightly away from him.

"Mr. Akenside," she said softly, "I am going to give you my Syrinx—as a wedding present."

"A wedding present!"

"Yes, I always do things the other way around. My wedding present to you, because I am going to be married."

Stunned, but conscious of a great gladness, the gladness of escape, Robert found himself master of his voice.

"I congratulate Mr. Laleham," he said steadily.

Aspasia laughed a low, rippling laugh, the laugh Sam Taylor dreaded.

"You are always so rash, and, as usual, quite wrong. No, Laleham is not the person one marries—not in that way. The man you must congratulate is—but he is coming here, I think. You can give us both your blessing in your best melodramatic style."

From the street below came the sound of a car drawing up. A few moments later there were footsteps on the stair, the door opened, and Signora Ricci announced:

"Il Signore Professore Urbano!"

Entering with the lightness of a schoolboy, the old man kissed Aspasia's hand and turned to Robert, who for once kept his color and his voice with such mastery that the girl almost admired him.

"Urbano," Akenside said heartily,

taking his friend's hand, "my best wishes, my very best wishes."

Then in a lower tone he added: "Fortune favors the brave, as you said, O true prophet."

Urbano winced ever so little at the words, but he kept his poise and murmured formal thanks.

"You have not thanked me for my wedding present," Aspasia cried. "You are always so forgetful!"

Robert bowed as he took the casket she held out to him.

"The Syrinx," he said, smiling with gentle irony, as he turned to go, "will be rosemary, to teach me remembrance."—"I'm glad," he thought, "it won't be rue"—"And now good-bye. Tomorrow I return to my books, to England, the river and my roses."



WATER LEAF AND WING

By CLARENCE URMY

*TELL me of a fairer thing
Than the water, leaf and wing
Unbound in the early spring!*

Water from the springs that sleep
In the hillsides dark and deep,
Singing in its silver flight
Down the Valley of Delight.

Leaf that lifts an emerald eye
To the turquoise-tinted sky,
Harkening that it may hear
Flora's footfall drawing near.

Wing of butterfly and bird,
Air with rainbow colors blurred,
Wing of dragonfly and bee
O'er the honey-laden lea—

*Tell me of a fairer thing
Than the water, leaf and wing
Unbound in the early spring!*

AT TWILIGHT

By VANDERHEYDEN FYLES

ONE of the nursemaids said: "When it's getting dark I always run past that house." "Do you?" exclaimed the other. "I like to watch; it's all so romantic, I think."

Margaret Wardell, with an involuntary feeling of disgust, moved farther away from the women. She drew the thick veil closer about her face. However, she did not move so far along the park wall but that she still faced the large, rambling house low set among the trees across the broad roadway of Riverside Drive. It was almost the last of the spacious, stately Colonial mansions that graced, at intervals, the broad, shaded lawns sloping from the Albany Road to the river a hundred years ago. But the post road was now Broadway, veined with roaring subways and flanked by huge, ornate apartment hotels. And the old homes had fallen, one by one, to make way for the million dollar palaces of sugar kings and emperors of the "installment plan."

The house at which Margaret gazed stood in a square by itself, surrounded by a high, vine-covered wall. Above that the ancient trees seemed to seek to comfort the lonely lingerer from an earlier day by wrapping the arms of their great branches about it and hiding its fading glory from curious modern gaze in the rich green thickness of their foliage. Only the broad, high gallery across the front was unshrouded by trees; yet even that calm face, which had looked serenely upon the flow of the Hudson from the mountains to the sea for a hundred years and more, was veiled in vines, clinging like delicate

lace from one great white pillar to the next.

It was twilight. Margaret saw one of the long windows, leading to the gallery, opened from within. Then, through the network of vines, she could distinguish the white figure of a woman moving slowly out on the veranda. The lady gently parted the vines and gazed out at the rushing waters of the river. Margaret was not surprised; each day had ended so; yet she felt a tremor pass over her. She looked a moment longer, and then, almost as though in panic, she hurried down the Drive a block or two and turned up a side street to where she had told her chauffeur to wait.

The younger Wardell heard the outer door close. But it was some minutes before Margaret returned to the library. She paused to turn up the lamps, but did not touch her untasted coffee; nor did she return to the mass of documents and letters which she already had begun to sort and annotate or answer for her husband. Instead, she leaned idly against the mantelpiece, gazing into the cool, fern-filled fireplace.

"He's gone, Tony." She thinly veiled her feeling beneath a tone of pouting, half-humorous petulancy.

Her brother-in-law laughed. "You're as doleful as though Sanford had gone for all time. Strikes me you might gracefully spare him for a few weeks a year to the woolly State that lets you and the Senate have him all the rest of the time."

"It's not only having to get on

without him." Again she softened the hard lines of her thoughts in a shimmering veil of whimsicality. "Ask me where I've been today. Ask me where I've secretly gone many days of late. I need to be forced to tell."

"Very well. As head of the family till Ford comes back, I require and charge you—"

However, she did not now reply in the bantering tone into which she herself had led him. She gave the long look of her eyes not to him, but to the damp, cool ferns.

"Prowling," she said—then corrected: "No, not that; not spying at all. I simply was drawn involuntarily."

"Into still more work for Sanford?" Anthony thought to laugh off her mood.

"No," Margaret answered. "To her."

"Her?"

"His wife." The even tone was clearly deliberate, and, apparently, not easy. Anthony, now definite, authoritative, said: "Don't use that word."

"She is that," Margaret retorted, her unusual emotion less under her control. "That Western, unpopulated State he bought body and soul—sun-baked sands and sagebrush, I should say—couldn't do more than make a legal difference."

"Is all that to be raked up and gone over again—and after five years?" He spoke rather wearily, but underneath there was an unmistakable firmness, finality, almost harshness.

"Has it ever, I begin to wonder, really been gone over?"

"It seems to me"—he spoke more pliantly now—"it seems to me I recall two pretty tough years bringing you and Sanford to do the one thing in the world you wanted to do; bringing you together."

"That—the last, I mean—was done without aid or effort, in two days, two weeks at most. That was here, before I knew even of her existence."

"What difference should that have made?" he retorted. "A poor, mad girl. How was she any more his wife than if it had been all of her, instead of

just her mind that was dead?—hopelessly, eternally dead, remember!"

"Wasn't that argument pretty comfortably convenient to what we all wanted?"

"You said so—more than once."

"Yes," she reflected. "I did do that much."

"Nearly two years you held out," Anthony added hastily. Those years had taught him to catch quickly at the first suggestion of a favorable point. "But why now, tonight, go over all this?"

"I've been up there several days. Not in the house, I mean; watching from across the driveway. And I wonder if I've the right—" Her words faded into silent thought. Suddenly, almost violently, she turned on her brother-in-law. "Does your success—you yourself, just now, claimed credit for our marriage—does that result of two 'tough' years never haunt you, never terrify you?"

"No, by God, it does not." He spoke with a sort of huge, vehement defensiveness. "I can't think of my brother's career and regret any help I've been, so long as it was without dishonor."

She turned her eyes calmly to his. Her head was high. He was not unused to the nobility, the unconscious dignity, of her invariable simplicity, directness, purity of thought. "Hadm't we better," she said, "thinking of her, leave honor out of it?"

"I don't see that," he threw back. "That's where you're wrong. You're morbid, Margaret. Remember, too, she's contented up there; everything is done for her. Trust Sanford for that."

"Oh, that I believe," Margaret murmured.

"And she never has known of the divorce," Anthony went on. "She wouldn't be able to comprehend it, anyway. Why, her nurses, doctors, companions tell me that she often thinks herself still in the little house in the country where they lived the few years—"

"—of their marriage," Margaret completed where he hesitated.

"You seem to blame me," her brother-in-law broke in. "Well, I'm willing to take it. You and Sanford would have let scruples ruin both your lives. But I want you to remember one thing: as long as there was a shadow of hope that she might recover, I never tried to separate them, to swerve Ford one jot from his grim, unselfish constancy. I saw the career we'd hoped for, worked for, had every reason to expect, slipping away. I saw him let everything go to nurse and guard and comfort the girl he'd married. But when her brain was utterly clouded, when the last hope was gone, when for months she had not even recognized him as he watched beside her, I determined to think less of her and more of him."

Margaret had regained her habitual calm. She sank into a deep chair. "Do you think you had that right?" she said.

"I know I had. I've proved it. At first I thought only of getting him away—travel, that sort of thing."

"As when he met me," Margaret interposed.

"Yes, you. I never have underestimated you, Margaret," Anthony continued. "You didn't just bring him back to life; you rebuilt him on a finer, bigger scale. She never could have helped him. She was just a pretty child."

"I want to believe I've helped him," Margaret returned. "It would be some justification. For, of course, Tony, I've given nothing. I've only gained. Till I was nearly thirty I didn't understand what life could mean. My youth was very empty."

"He's loved you," Anthony added. "He's loved you as he never loved her, never could have."

Margaret started in her chair. Her face flushed. She leaned forward. "What do you mean?" she said.

Anthony saw in an instant what he had done, or, rather, all that his careless word had undone. He endeavored, inadequately, hastily, by the first means to retrace his misstep:

"You know what I mean; the girl, sweet enough, but—"

"But his love?" she threw back.

"A little affection, kindness—"

"Don't!" Margaret cried. "Not that. Be straight. You know very well what you told me, what finally decided me."

"We have no reason to believe it wasn't true," Anthony returned. "Probably he did marry her to protect her, to nurse her, to give the poor girl the benefit of his money. Most likely he did. He was well aware of the taint in the family; that I know."

Margaret's voice became almost harsh. "You allowed no doubt as to Ford's reason then," she said.

"No," Anthony retorted, his persuasive tone changed to vehemence. "And if I stretched a point, I don't regret it. I'd do it again, now, any time, to pull my brother up."

"And what about me?" Margaret queried.

"I think," Anthony replied bluntly, "I think you're falling from the bigness of all you've done down pretty close to common feminine jealousy."

"And if I have?" Anthony never had seen her lose control before, lose her sense of balance, of complete unselfishness. "If I have?" she went on. "Didn't you say, just now, how much I've helped? Well, I've given him all I have. That's the only thing I care for; that's what life means to me. But in return I want all his love; I will have it. I'll go to this woman. I'll find out how it was."

Anthony leaned over to her. He put his hand on hers. "This will pass," he said tenderly. "You're not yourself. But go, if you want to. See the dead woman who lost in a few years what you have, if it's possible she ever had it. I know you, Margaret. I know how it will be. And it won't be envy that you'll come away with."

Margaret herself could not have told quite why she realized the exact moment when she lost the attention of the white lady among the cushions. She did not notice it by stopping her reading, or even by lowering her voice. Always peculiarly sensitive to the

moods and fancies of people about her, she had felt her understanding grow even keener in the two weeks during which she had spent her afternoons in the spacious, comfortable rooms of the large old house on Riverside Drive, or on the broad, cool gallery looking toward the Hudson. She had come to feel, without conscious effort, the fleeting changes: the more lucid periods, with their vivid flashes of recollection, almost supernaturally clear, and the clouded hours, misty, usually silent, quite meaningless.

The new companion, as Margaret had arranged to be known to Rosemary, had quickly superseded the other numerous nurses and attendants in her interest and affection. Margaret seemed to the pale lady to know books to read that she could follow without the painful effort, the growing confusion, the inevitable chaos at the last. The fragile lady, delicate as the weblike laces that fell about her, could not know the subtle scrutiny, the lapses, the rereadings of the efficient, watchful woman who read to her from across the paneled rooms or beside the great white pillars or beneath the sheltering trees on the soft, sloping lawn. Rosemary hardly knew when she first came, or from where. For the white lady did not question these things. Or, if she did, she straightway forgot what the gentle voices about her answered. She remembered only the things before, long before: the little white house with the green roof, the many trees and flowers and the swift, broad brook—always the brook with the ripple and rush of its waters. She liked to imitate the sound of it for Margaret. Her laugh, she said, was like the rippling of the brook. One who could not be wrong had said so. But though Margaret agreed that the soft laugh was very like the fresh, cool stream, she never would listen to who it was who first had said so; she always had a story that must be read at that moment, or a song that must be sung. The white lady thought it very strange. Then she remembered that it did not matter. Nothing

mattered. Presently she had forgotten all about it.

Margaret continued to read, but in a few moments she saw that, though the mind behind the pale forehead had wandered, it had not clouded. She let the book fall to her lap.

"You're tired of the story?" she asked.

Rosemary turned her head. Margaret saw she had been looking through one of the long windows to the river.

"It is twilight," she murmured. Her voice was low, dispassionate.

Margaret moved as though to rise. "Then I must go," she said.

"Won't you—won't you stay this time?" The tone was hesitant, apologetic, timid.

Margaret had thought it Rosemary's wish that she always should go at this hour. For every evening, almost before she had left the grounds, she had seen the lady in lace move out to the veranda, and pause there, looking calmly towards the river sparkling in reflected shafts of the vanished sun beyond. But now Margaret took the hand held out to her, and together they passed through one of the low windows to the gallery. Rosemary parted the wistaria that hung thick from pillar to pillar. She leaned silently against one of the great posts. The odd, clear light cruelly accentuated the thin paleness of the drawn features. Margaret felt her eyes blur as she looked at the wasted, tired face that had been thought so pretty only a few years before. For now she was an old lady, the girl who held back the wistaria, a withered old lady but for the soft waves of brown hair that fell over her forehead.

"You've been very good to me," she said. "Everyone is. But you, somehow, are different from the others. And you can remember things; I can depend on you. I want you to promise me something."

Margaret again put her hand on Rosemary's; the gesture eloquently reassured her.

"You see, I forget things," the lady in white explained. "I don't know why; I try so hard not to. And, oh,

I'm so afraid of forgetting this some day!" Her voice was plaintively appealing. Then a note of actual terror quickened it. "You won't ever let me forget, will you—not ever?"

"No, no," Margaret calmed her. Then after a pause she said, "What is it you must remember?"

"Twilight," she answered quietly, very simply.

Margaret did not hasten her to a fuller answer.

"That is his hour, you know," Rosemary said at last.

"His?" Margaret tried to speak interrogatively; but already she could feel a dull beat in her heart. For, instead of leading to the subject that had at first been the excited purpose of her invasion of the old house, she had found herself, almost from the start, avoiding it, putting it off till a tomorrow, dreading it, even. She had successfully eluded all but the suggestion of that earlier life; but, of course, she had realized that it must be faced in time.

"I was married, you know," the gentle voice went on. "But perhaps you don't know. Things are so strangely confused." After a moment she murmured, "I wasn't permitted to have him long."

Margaret felt something thick in her throat. She looked away. For Margaret, you see, could know what it would mean "not to be permitted to have him long."

"He died," the colorless voice continued. Then after a pause she laughed, a low, rippling laugh: "Funny name, Sandy!"

"Sandy?" Margaret echoed.

"That's what I called him," she explained. "He had another name. At least, I suppose he had. I can't remember. But he must have, for nobody but me called him Sandy—just I. I think I'm glad it is that name I can remember."

Margaret brought her eyes back to Rosemary, the woman who had come before her, who had had even her own foolish name for him. And not he, nor Tony, nor anyone ever had spoken of it.

"You don't think it silly of me to have called him that? You don't, do you?" Rosemary pleaded as might a bewildered, half-frightened child. "It's funny, I know. But everything was funny then—the deep, thick woods, the brook, the evenings in our little home. We just laughed all day." She laughed lightly in recollection. Then, speaking again perplexedly, appealingly, to Margaret, she said, "I don't know why we laughed. I can't seem to remember any reason. Probably it doesn't matter."

Margaret pressed her lips together firmly. She hardly formulated a reason, but she stepped back from Rosemary, as though the better to control herself. But the white lady, a sort of fear again mingling with the appeal in her eyes, came towards her.

"Say you don't think it was wrong of me to be so silly the little time I had him, to just play and laugh."

For a moment an impotent, furious hate seemed to consume all the pity in Margaret's heart. She battled with it. She forced it back. Then, suddenly rushing towards her, she threw her arms about the fragile girl in lace.

"No, no, dear child," she cried. "I don't think it was silly. It was glorious. You were young—and you were young with him!"

It was some moments before Margaret released her.

"I knew you would understand," Rosemary said. "That's why I can trust you if I ever become utterly unable to remember."

Margaret looked into her eyes. "You can trust me." She spoke calmly now.

"Twilight is his hour," Rosemary said again. "He loved it. Then, too, it was twilight, I think, when I saw him last. A golden streak, I remember, shot across my bed. I opened my eyes. I held out my hand. 'You know me?' he said. 'Why, of course, Sandy,' I answered. And I laughed. And, do you know, he put his arms around me, and kissed me, and he cried—then, in a moment, he was laughing, and he lifted me right up out of my bed."

It seemed to Margaret as though the

pale lady must hear the beating of her heart. She wondered if the fire that scorched through her lighted her eyes. But Rosemary simply stood beneath the vines, calm, listless, almost expressionless. One might have thought her recollection already flown from the fleecy mind. For all her thought seemed suddenly concentrated on a new diversion. She lifted a slender hand and broke off a cluster of wistaria. Then she shook it so that the purple blossoms scattered all about her. And she laughed as a child might at the sight of the rain of color.

"I don't know how long it was after that," she said, after some minutes suddenly recalling her story. "They told me he was dead." Her mind slowly concentrated itself. She threw aside the remains of the broken flower.

"Now, always at twilight I come here and watch the river flow out to the sea. And I feel as though its waters carry my voice to him, somewhere out there, beyond what we know about."

Then Margaret saw a strange thing. For the lady in lace lifted a long, white arm, and held back the wistaria. With the other hand she blew a kiss to the sparkling waters flowing down from the hills to the sea. Then she threw back her head and laughed; a soft, girlish, rippling laugh.

"You can laugh?" Margaret exclaimed.

"He used to say he loved my laugh."

"But you can laugh?"

"Why, of course. But perhaps you don't understand. I didn't understand at first. When they told me he was dead, I just thought everything in life was over. Then, soon, it all came to me. I saw how kind God had been to me."

"Kind?" Margaret echoed.

"Why, yes. Don't you see? If he had lived, he might have tired of me; I was very shallow and silly. He might have felt the need of his work. He might have come to care for someone else, someone more helpful to him than I ever could have been. Then, too, he thought me pretty. See me now, not one little bit of prettiness left. How could he have loved me now?"

Margaret gazed at her in wonderment, almost awe. She looked stolidly at the woman she had thought to pity. And in place of the hard, swift beats of her heart, she felt a dull, miserable heaviness.

"I think you begin to see," Rosemary went on. "Wouldn't it have been bitter helplessly to have felt his love slip away from me, to have seen our life just fade to nothing? But now I have him always. It was just a few years, but they're mine. Nothing can ever change them; no one can ever take them from me."

Margaret held herself rigid. Her hands were clenched—she breathed heavily—her eyes burned. Rosemary looked at her in surprise.

"You don't think I'm wrong to believe that?" she pleaded.

Margaret drew away. She felt she must escape. But she knew she now had come to the thing from which there never could be escape.

"You, too, believe all that is mine now for always?" Rosemary asked again. "Say that."

"Yes," Margaret cried, "you're right! God help me, I know you're right." She turned and fled from the gallery and from the quiet old house among the trees into the rush and turmoil of the city.

Margaret stepped quietly from the darkened room and noiselessly closed the door. Anthony Wardell came to her across the broad, old-fashioned hallway.

"Unless the train is very late, Ford should be here soon," he said. "It's past midnight."

"You see him first," Margaret murmured wearily. Her face was drawn and tired. "Tell him how she died. I couldn't go over these last weeks—and to him. Make him understand that everything possible was done."

"That you were tireless, wonderful," Anthony added.

"That part doesn't matter," she replied. "I'll be on the lawn if he wants me." Then she added suddenly: "No, don't ask him. Be sure he comes to me before he looks at her."

Anthony nodded comprehendingly. "I understand," he said.

Margaret, alone beneath the spreading trees and the black sky, leaned against a huge elm. She was utterly spent. Her head throbbed. But it was less because of the many days and nights of watching, nursing, encouraging, than of what was now to come. Then she could force back her thoughts by work; now the rush of them was uncontrolled. She had come to her hour, she knew that; to her test.

She heard footsteps clicking on the gallery, and then the soft sound of them on the grass. She waited silently, without turning. He reached her. She felt his arms about her. She let herself rest in them.

"Margaret," he murmured, "what can I say to you—what's good enough?"

"At the last," she recited dully—"did they tell you?—at the last, she suffered very little."

"Thank God, the poor girl is beyond all that now!"

Margaret released herself, turning to look at him. She tried to see through his calm, strong face.

"Do you think of death that way—as the end?"

"The earthly end," he replied; "why, yes."

"I mean," she went on, "that she has ceased to exist for you?"

"That years ago—when I gave her up."

Margaret felt a great, joyous gust sweep through her as of fresh, reviving air. It seemed to carry off all the dull

misery of the last weeks. She glanced up. She thought she saw the first light of morning in the sky. A breeze rustled through the trees. Then, as she looked toward the low, white rambling house, she saw the light wind stir the dead wistaria and scatter the faded blossoms on the lawn. And she remembered again that this dawn was her hour.

"What I mean," she said, "is that what she was to you always will live. I won't know, nor Tony, nor anyone; but there will be times, perhaps at the end of a long day in the country, at twilight, when she'll come back to you. Likely as not, it will be some silly thing, some pointless little joke, something you laughed about together back there in the hills. You'll be silent; no one will know. But for a little time you'll be alone with her."

Sanford took both her hands in his, gently, reverently even. He bowed his head and kissed each of them. The sky had grown lighter now. The trees rustled, and in their branches the first birds of the morning sang.

"There's one thing I want you to do for me," Margaret went on. "And don't ask me why. Call it jealousy, vanity, anything you like. I want you not to look at her."

She paused a moment. She seemed to waver. Then she drew something from the folds of her gown.

"I cut this—just now," she stammered. The soft curl she handed him was the fresh, waving, clear brown of a woman in happy youth.



RONDELET

By A. WILLIAMS

HEIGHO! the marble stair,
Whereon my lady once did sit;
Heigho! the marble stair,
For, oh, I sat beside her there
And told my love tale bit by bit,
To get, alas! the icy mitt.
Heigho! the marble *stare!*

T. JEFFERSON DODD, AMERICAN

By ANITA FITCH

THE place was Paris, the day the Fourth of July, and the mood of the young lady on the little floating dock that of darkest despair.

A large share of American combativeness was mingled with it; for though Miss Filkins was homesick—much red, white and blue bunting was fluttering in the cosmopolitan city behind—Miss Filkins was not blind to the fact that infants in knee breeches have no right to smoke. Directly her schoolmistress's instinct overstepped everything, blinding her even to the fact that his horsey little clothes had a distinctly foreign stamp. With the faintest lift of a pair of delicate eyebrows—the eyes beneath them were quite as pretty—she turned to the human chimney beside her.

"I beg your pardon," she began, in the polite manner of the adopted city, "but does your mother know you smoke?"

The answer was not to the point; far from it. It was also, in the matter of Parisian perfection, in better French.

"Mademoiselle is American," returned the boy with imperturbable aplomb. "*Ça se voit*—it is plainly seen. So am I."

And s'ss! went the obnoxious cigarette into the Seine, and round turned Knee Breeches, with tweed cap off, to regard her with the amiable condescension all masculines feel for the female alone. The scrutiny was evidently in Miss Filkins's favor; for with a courteous "Permit me," a card passed from his hand into her unwilling fingers, upon which her eyes, equally unwilling, read:

T. JEFFERSON DODD

AMERICAN

She bowed involuntarily, beginning

faintly to be interested. In her well-bred way she scrutinized the gentleman in turn. He was what she called to herself "a square boy, with an indecently sporty cut." His gray eyes, cool, penetrating, bold and yet respectful, seemed to look through her as through clear glass.

A single query possessed her: was he twelve, fourteen or a hundred? She laughed a little foolishly, immensely taken aback.

"Oh, that accounts for it," was her ambiguous and yet perfectly understandable response; and, the boat they had both awaited touching at the little dock then, he handed her across the gangplank with a deliciously grown-up air.

As they traversed it, she saw what appeared to be a pair of small gamecocks thrusting ferocious heads and streaming tails from a paper parcel under his arm. She was a modest lady, with a natural horror of the unbecoming. Gamecocks, to say the least of it, were unbecoming.

"They are only toy roosters," he confided, evidently scenting her alarm. "You know, the kind you wind up to make fight. I've named the best one America, the other France. Got 'em on the Rue de Rivoli; seven francs fifty."

Now, if you have lived in Paris, dear reader, you will know that it takes just one hour for the little boats, which go puffing up and down the Seine like greedy birds, to reach Sèvres. You will also know that if accident throws you across one of your own countrymen during that tedious voyage you will in this time become very well acquainted. Besides, Miss Filkins was twenty-eight if a day; Knee Breeches twelve, four-

teen or a hundred—and already, without wordy protest at least, she had accepted the acquaintance of “toy roosters.”

Side by side they walked to a bench on the deck of the *hirondelle*, for swallows some of these noisy, grimy little boats are called. Side by side they sat down. It was too stuffy *en bas*, he announced; besides, it was pretty to watch Paris slipping away as you went along.

The lady smiled. She was unused to small boys taking the initiative. It seemed, all at once, very pleasant.

He took the initiative in everything. Talk of Paris, London, Rome, Venice and Berlin, of *real* chicken fights, rolled from his lips like the song and story of the phonograph. He had been everywhere, seen everything.

Yet presently he sighed—a long, boyish and quite miserable sigh. Then he caught Miss Filkins's eye, a puzzled and slightly reproving maiden eye. He smiled slowly.

“Been up to Paris to tea? At Neal's?” he continued, and again she nodded a helpless affirmative.

“Go there myself sometimes,” he went on. “Bum old place. But you see the people you went to see on days like this. And all the newspapers. I'm”—he paused, turning to stare a moment at the lacelike silhouette of the Eiffel Tower against the sky—“I'm at school at St. Cloud. École Simon de Paul. Select—only three boys besides me—all rich. I'm rich. That's why I go to Paris every afternoon. I'm bored to death.” And another and profounder sigh gave a breathing spell. Then, “Do you know about the Simon de Paul?” he inquired.

“I've heard of it,” murmured Miss Filkins, fairly battling in a sea of bewilderment.

For think, *think*, of any well brought up boy—he looked enormously well brought up—brazenly stating that he was rich! For a moment, the tiniest breath of a moment, it seemed worse than the cigarettes. Then all ears, all eyes, there was a discreet young lady, who taught English for a miserable

stipend to the young French idea, listening again.

Miss Filkins's school was at Sèvres, almost immediately on the borders of the Seine, and with only the breadth of the old royal park between that chaste abode and the village of St. Cloud. But she did not tell T. Jefferson Dodd that now. Something within her told her to be dumb regarding her own meager history. It is the instinct of woman when she meets masculines like this.

Watching the receding towers and domes of Paris by moments, by moments watching her, he continued:

“My mother is married again. That's why I'm spending holidays at school. I don't like my stepfather. He's my guardian, too, and when mamma married him she forfeited all but her widow's portion. So I can keep 'em straight. They don't dare to cross me. I have my allowance, and he knows if he don't behave I'll bounce him when I'm twenty-one. But”—Miss Filkins had gasped—“you mustn't think I'm hateful with mamma. She's the prettiest darling—all fluffy like a French doll. That's why I gave my consent to her marrying again. She's so young, you know; and she was in love, desperately. I'll make it up to her when I get the money. She stays at the Continental when she's in Paris. But she's at Monte Carlo now. She likes to gamble, poor, foolish child.”

“Oh!” said Miss Filkins.

Then she stared hard at the gambler's son. French boys were milksops at that age—twelve, or a hundred?—but in America . . . She uttered the word aloud; evidently.

“It's a bully good old country,” he returned. “I”—the eyes were only twelve now—“got quite gumpy when I saw the flags in Paris today. And yesterday”—he began to laugh boyishly—“there were some little whipper-snapper Frenchmen putting teeny ones—regular twofers—around the little Liberty statue on the bridge. It made me sick! So I marched right down to the Louvre and got a hunky big one and came back and spread it all over old

Liberty's toes. Well, I wish you could have seen the Frenchmen stare! '*Vive l'Amérique!*' they yelled till your ears hurt, and you felt like a cent. But"—he was quite serious now—"I paid ten dollars for it. It was a dandy."

In a moment they were passing beneath the bridge which held the marble symbol of the land of Stars and Stripes. The "dandy" was in delicious evidence—the Liberty's spiked and exiled head seemed, too, to have taken a prouder lift; and looking back, smilingly, Miss Filkins heard that there was another American flag, even bigger, much bigger, which was fluttering now over the École Simon de Paul. Madame—who but the directress of this institution so palpably in danger?—had let him run it up above the French flag. There was also a French boy there, "a fat sneak of a red-eyed bully," who would be a marquis some day.

"I lick him sometimes," concluded the speaker, with an air of ineffable pleasure, "though he's bigger than I am."

Miss Filkins gurgled. But the feeling within was not understandable, even to herself. And how often had she all but spanked French boys for a hundredth part of this!

Still, the moment seemed propitious, pointing as it did to a possibility of more of his private history.

"Tell me about her," she said, settling herself comfortably, lost to everything but a square boy, who seemed to have so much of the screaming American eagle about him—that far-off bird whose splendid ways she had almost forgotten. "About Madame Simon de Paul," she concluded.

"Oh"—the eyes were a hundred now—"she's all right."

"But how does she look?" queried Miss Filkins insistently. "What is she like in manner?"

He shifted uneasily, then turned, deliberately fixing her with a cool stare.

"Why do you want to know?" he asked at last, plainly suspicious of her motive.

"Oh, just because . . ." She floun-

dered helplessly. Then a straw appeared in her tossing ocean.

"Well, if you must know," she laughed, "I am a schoolmistress too. *Maitresse d'anglais à l'École Sévigné, à Sèvres.*"

It was the first time she had spoken French since the moment on the *ponton*; and now she blushed girlishly, remembering his own skill in this polished language.

"You see," she stammered, "it was in the interest of business. Some day, perhaps, I shall be a *directrice* too. I am always thinking of a school of my own, so as to have more liberty, more room to breathe."

The bait took. He looked tremendously sympathetic.

"I see. Well"—he stopped reflectively—"she's very dignified."

"Yes?"

"And dark—and—plump. Little, too, but not like mamma. Smooth. She—"

"Yes?" prodded Miss Filkins, for the pause had been a long one.

"Thirty, she says. She looks—
younger. A heap."

"Husband?"

"No." He sighed. "Ah!"

"Yes?"

"That's just it. I'm worried about her."

"Why?" Again Miss Filkins's delicate eyebrows lifted; but he was too preoccupied to notice. He sighed again, a sigh that came from the depths.

"She's in—love," he said slowly. "With a Frenchman; a *misérable*. Professor of astronomy from the Observatory. A thin—stiff—dark brute. Selfish as mud. Cross of the Legion of Honor. She'd die for him. Puts six sugar lumps by his *verre d'eau* on the desk; other professors only get two. And sugar's dear—fourteen cents a pound. But look here"—and quite anxiously he paused to assure her that all this was between themselves. "I would never have told you, only . . ."

Again he paused, his mysterious eyes looking down into Miss Filkins's soul. She fancied she caught a new glint in them—something quite new. He

mustn't worry, she hastened to say. She was in the same indiscreet boat. Monsieur Bertrand lectured at the Sévigné, too. And there was a lady there who adored his dark eyes and his *Cross aussi*.

"Madame Lambour's daughter. Oh!" And Madame Lambour's employee laughed as if all the strings of that abode of oppression had slipped from her.

He seemed satisfied.

"Then you understand. She's poor—Madame—so poor! All her little old black frocks darned up, and her toes almost out of her shoes."

"Poor! But I thought you were all rich—the pupils."

"That doesn't matter."

"Even when schools are exclusive?"

"No. They've got to charge just a certain amount. It's only decent. Besides"—he was staring gravely—"Madame is an aristocrat. She is too nice to grind—about money."

"Oh."

"So—don't you see?"

"No."

"The school isn't worth shucks to him. And they never marry without a *dot*—a marriage portion—Frenchmen, never!"

"Well?"

"I'm going to give her one."

"You?"

"Me. I wrote mamma about it; five thousand dollars. I'd make it ten if my guardian would let me. He's a stingy Dick."

"What"—Miss Filkins was strangling—"what did your mother say when she wrote back?"

"She poked fun all over the letter," the boy returned, grinning in a new, shy way. "'Oh,' she said, 'there you are again!' and 'Oh, you funny boy!' and 'Of course.'"

"There you are again?"

"Meaning that I was in love again."

"You! With Madame Simon de Paul?"

"Of course!" The eyes, rounded like a young owl's and as solemn, were only twelve now.

"Whom else would I be in love

with?" he pursued wonderingly. "She's only thirty! And I asked her quite honorably—quite, you understand—to wait till I grew up. She's very sweet. She nursed me when I had typhoid last summer, and sat there with tears big as marbles rolling down her cheeks. I was so weak, and mamma was in Biarritz. I sent her—anonymously, you know—a thousand francs for Christmas. She cried when she got that, too. The rent was due."

"Did she cry when you—proposed?"

"Yes. That's how I knew about Monsieur Bertrand. It all came out. Mamma says whenever a woman cries when a man proposes it's because there's another man."

"Ah!"

"So I stopped loving her on the spot. Anyway, she told me she was too old. And then I suppose she told Monsieur Bertrand—about the five thousand. He's getting sweeter on her. Decenter to me, too. Rolled up the paper I gave him; and '*Vive l'Amérique!*' he said, too."

"What paper?" Miss Filkins's voice had an anxious note.

"Why, my promise about the *dot*; my I. O. U. for the five. Wrote it on the bottom of my guardian's letter. Two together as good as gold."

"Yes, I know. But"—she was almost ridiculously anxious—"surely—surely it isn't due till the wedding day; the—five?"

"Guess not!" This with a swaggering hunch of his tweed shoulders. "What do you take me for?"

The *maîtresse d'anglais à l'École Sévigné* stared. Did they make them all like that in America now? She felt old, suddenly, immensely antiquated. Then she began to laugh, head back; and quite a neat, plainly dressed little brown head it was.

"Oh!" she shrieked. "We have him, prudent Monsieur Bertrand. Oh—"

She seemed likely to go into hysterics, so exquisite was the point which tickled her fancy.

But fortunately Destiny held the

helm, if there was one, of the *hiron-delle*; its blunt prow stopped at Sèvres.

Miss Filkins arose, reassuming some of the prim dignity which is an indispensable garment in Paris for the post of schoolmistress. She extended a hand, faintly ashamed of the long and intimate *tête-à-tête*.

"Good-bye. I'm pleased to have met you," she said in the correct, perfunctory way. "There's my school over yonder; the gate with the arched sign."

He looked past her gloved fingers.

"I'll take you over," was his masterful announcement.

Their four feet came down on the joggly gangplank, and accompanied by the toy gamecocks, once more under his left arm, there they were leaving the boat as they had entered it.

The distance to the temple of oppression and sly little French children was short; and on the way their teacher asked herself dolefully how it would be possible ever to stand them again. She discoursed on the subject with her companion. She told him, too, how long she had been away from home.

"Ages! Ah, if you knew!" she lamented. "I even dream in French."

Evidently he did know. He looked up with prodigious understanding; commenting even, with a cheering vehemence, that it was a "blamed shame."

They came to the gate, the sign of which bore the name of the school, and the further announcement that it was a select *pensionnat* for *demoiselles*.

"I'm glad they ain't boys," announced T. Jefferson Dodd, as if commencing with his own strange soul.

For the veil of venerable age had again enveloped him. Silent, mysterious, contemplative, he stood a little moment staring up at her.

As for Cecilia Filkins—for Cecilia was her pretty name—she had grown younger in the past hour. Now, in the gathering dusk, she seemed almost sylphlike. The worry in her eyes was gone, and a breeze from somewhere—perhaps from the ocean blue—again filled her momentarily drooping sails

with daring zephyrs. The arched sign, once synonymous with all that was stern, seemed almost to have its finger to its nose, for rules and regulations.

"When can I see you?" he asked, holding her hand now and looking upward with eyes vastly more explanatory; in fact, with openly admiring, twelve-year-old eyes—if infants of that age can look admiringly at a lady of twenty-eight. For this seemed, beyond a doubt, his age, at last. "Friday? Saturday?" he pursued with enchanting and precocious patience.

Miss Filkins knew the usual twelve-year-old. In matters not vital to the bosom it was easily discouraged.

"Sunday after next," she prompted now, fancying this would be the wet blanket. But nothing of the sort.

"If you don't mind," he said calmly, "I'll come this Sunday." The lady took the defeat prettily; she liked the square boy all the better for his presumption.

"Very well," she beamed. And then, after a little moment, "Four o'clock," she added.

She was silent another moment, stopped smiling and drew away her hand.

"If you want," she began slowly at last—she was smiling again—"you might come and take tea with me on the terrace under the lindens. It's lovely there. But"—she had begun suddenly to feel once more alarmed—"of course it would be stupid for you."

"Awfully!"

He waived that piteous possibility.

"I'll come, all right," came back gruffly; and down went the engagement in a tiny, important-looking book, the lady obligingly holding the champion birds during the operation. She made a little grimace as she handed them back.

"They are horrid—dreadful! But don't—!"

For at her word he deliberately flung the feathered joys—he had nursed them with infinite tenderness—to the far side of the road; where, bursting from their paper, they lay with tin spurs pathetically pointing to a thin thread

of moon beginning to show itself in the sky.

There are moments which are entirely explanatory of all that has gone before. This instant of sublime sacrifice was one of them. Miss Filkins put on an austere countenance; she thought hard of a passage quoted from a maternal letter—and ended with more enchanted smiling.

What a treasure to order into naughty corners, to hold upon the knee and *bercer*! And where was his idiotic, enviable parent? Gambling in Monte Carlo! A little feeling came suddenly in the maiden breast to play mammy to this drift in the sea of gold. She had longed, as maiden ladies often long, for a son of her own; this delightful young scamp seemed, all at once, the very pattern for sons.

The gate opened noiselessly. But still he lingered, a very electrical, square boy in baggy breeches, already plainly strewing roses at a new shrine. In the event of another disappointment—the honorable proposal seemed a matter of course—would he try to insure her happiness, too, with a *dot*, and be worried forever after?

The wooing was simple, enchantingly artless.

"Say," he whispered suddenly, "what are you going to do Saturday?"

She acknowledged, a little timidly, that there was nothing for her to do, since the Sévigné's pupils were all *en vacance*.

He proposed the Gingerbread Fair at St. Cloud. Why couldn't she go with him? The wooden horses were such fun, and he always rode on the lions and tigers.

"Do go," he pleaded—"the cocoa is so good. And we'll buy *mirlitons* and blow 'em, and do it all up brown."

She nodded. "Very well," and laughed a little to see herself in fancy whirling on some wild beast or other in the giddy merry-go-round.

"Yes, we'll do it up brown," giggling charmingly now. "I'll blow—even—*mirlitons*!"

He gave her hand a small squeeze.

"I liked you the moment I saw you," he delivered with *empressement*—*empressement* anything but filial. "And I like you now to beat the band! Do you want me to cut cigarettes?" he inquired, regarding her with grave and thoroughly approving eyes.

She shook her head violently. "No! . . . *Adieu!*"

He grinned his incredulity. It was exactly as if he said, "Shucks! You know you all want us to stop smoking—the men you like." "*Au revoir*," he corrected, with a telling emphasis of the more promising phrase. And then, "*A samedi, alors; deux heures et demie.*"

He bowed splendidly, the neatest man-boy bow Miss Filkins had ever seen, started away, turned and came back, with only a dear, appealing little boy manner.

"You'd been crying today. Don't any more. Here!" and he thrust a sticky package, drawn from a bulging pocket, into her hand, as if this were the sovereign cure for grief.

"It's *nougat*. I got it for Madame, but I'd rather you'd have it now, of course."

He paused for a moment, staring down at his square shoes, then looked up with the little crooked smile she'd seen before and which was to seem as poignant presently as tears on a baby's face. "Anyway—your homesickness—I've got it too, sometimes. That's what I meant on the boat. Golly!

"Of course I could bolt back any time," he went on with a shade of the old swagger. "I've got 'em trained. But mamma likes it over here, and Madame's got to have pupils like me; they advertise, you know."

"Oh, yes," assented Miss Filkins a little waspishly; "homesick boys!" Yet the mammy spot in her bosom, stuffed to the last cranny with a dire sense of responsibility, was big to suffocation.

He read her emotions as any man would read them. "Well, I like you best now," came promptly; which seemed so funny and infantine that she stooped with a laughing word

and shamefully kissed him, reaping thereby a husky "Thank you," and a glance from an eye grown adorably bashful.

Then he was gone.

Gone? Ah, not quite yet, this strong-winged eaglet who had so glorified the sky of a young person grown sensitive with long exile.

She could see him still, walking toward the Park of St. Cloud with delightful swagger, yet looking in the deepening dusks just like what he was, after all, a lonely, too-rich little laddie, who had nobody to care, really, whither he went or whence he came.

Directly the deeper dusk swallowed

him; and then a starry light flashed in his wistful wake. One, two, three!

Were they cigarette matches? Or were they Fourth of July firecrackers, which, hitched all the time invisibly to the tail of his audacious and heroic little coat, had gone off all of themselves?

"You darling!" laughed Cecilia as she looked, his little *penchant* for elderly ladies in distress being not the least of the vanished gentleman's charms at this moment.

And then she flew into the street to pick up his sacrifice to Love—the dear toy roosters she had hatefully made him throw away.



THE WIZARD'S BALL

By ALOYSIUS COLL

COMES a woman to her door
Where Joy shall enter nevermore:
Who shall bear the word of pain?
"Call me not, for I am Gladness"
Cried the spirit of the Rain!

Sits a woman by her hearth,
Shorn of every gift on earth;
Who shall bear her company?
Quoth the Wind: "For Mirth and Laughter
Am I fashioned; call not me!"

Weeps a woman, old with tears;
Who shall tell her how the years
Wait to grieve her—is there one?
"Page am I of golden Morning;
Call me never!" sang the Sun.

Comes a smiling lass of May;
Who shall bring her love today,
And with love its grief and pain?
"We are ready!" shout the pages
Of the Sun and Wind and Rain.

THE OTHER WOMAN'S PICTURE

By MRS. JOHN VAN VORST

WILL STRICKLAND was to take leave of his wife that evening.

His comings and goings only superficially changed the aspect of things in his New York home. Dora Strickland's feelings, which at her husband's first departure had been roused to gentle desperation, were now become quite indifferent on the question of marital separation. Strickland was the sort of man for whom it was so difficult to do anything. Dora insisted that her husband knew so wonderfully better than she did how to make himself comfortable that all solicitude on her part was discouraged.

Whose was the fault? Perhaps his. Perhaps her own.

The expedition upon which her husband was to embark, and which had set her to thinking again, would take him for a time to the West, into the mountains, and then for months down through the wilder parts of Mexico. Strickland wanted to go to these places; it had been a long cherished plan of his. The man who was going with him was doing it merely to get away from New York. Dora had heard Eugene Griscom say just this very thing the night before, when they three had taken their farewell dinner at Sherry's: that he wanted "to get away; *must* get away."

The intensity with which he reiterated the words, as though he longed to shake from him the suggestion of something wrong, the melancholy with which his eyes met Dora's as he pronounced his resolution, were not, even though they made clearer her perception of Eugene Griscom's attitude towards her, a revelation. She knew, not because he had told her, not because, as with the more

flippant, the expression of his feelings was forever on his tongue's end, but simply, with the feminine fine instinct in the matters of love, she knew that Eugene Griscom cared for her. He was leaving New York in order to sever at its start a growing attachment. Did he not understand—Dora let her thoughts dwell for a moment at a time on this question, as one not sure of a steady head glances, fascinated by the danger, over the edge of a precipice—did Griscom not realize that no voluntary determination could stifle at its start the "growing attachment"? Ah, how well she realized this herself! The arrow which Cupid lets fly from his bow must follow the length of its flight, and fall by its own weight.

Yet, though this were the expression of her inward conviction, she maintained toward the fact of Griscom's departure the purely worldly attitude of mind. His going away was explicable on the ground of his friendship for her husband, his love of adventure, his passion for hunting. These were all motives sufficient to call a man away from dull, dreary New York in the month of November to wander through the plains and mountains of the West.

A book open on her knees, her thoughts wandering, Dora, on that last afternoon, sat before the open fire in the library of the New York house. Five o'clock, and with it the entrance of the liveried footman, the lighting of lamps, the drawing of curtains, changed the atmosphere of reverie and twilight to one of intimacy and anticipation, and this intrusion on her solitude brought Dora's thoughts back to the hour and to the rapidity with which

the day was passing. How swiftly the hands of the clock were moving towards that "last hour" before parting! Dora looked to this hour appealingly. So much might depend upon the way that Will took leave of her! So much was yet ungiven in her soul that she longed to give. While Will was still with her, it would never be too late . . . And thus appealingly she considered this last moment as though some change might be wrought in it, as though it might, like the tiny pebble properly placed, divert the whole course of a stream that was leading towards destruction.

If Will at the last, she thought, would only make some final binding demand, which, like a sudden burst of sunshine on the unopened flower, would warm her heart, ripen it to full bloom while she waited his return . . . In the eagerness with which she formulated this wish there was more than longing that what was right and natural should come to pass; there was fear, fear from which she wanted to protect herself.

With the hesitation of some impulse ill defined, Dora got up. Her long dress swept gently with her, obedient to the swaying of her graceful form. The soft carpet muffled the sound of her little feet as she walked about. Here and there, by the mantelpiece, by the book shelves, she paused. It was a drawer in the library table standing half open that seemed to give form to her intentions. This was Will's table; the papers, the letters, the photographs in it were his. With nervous rapidity Dora began to search; snatching finally from the drawer its whole disturbed contents, she flung them down pellmell, tossing about the fragments of an increasing confusion into whose depths her slender hands with knowing precision went swiftly.

There!

She had found it!

Laying it gently in her lap while she again effaced all traces of her impetuous rummaging, she put the drawer in some sort of order, and then, for a time, she stood under the lamp looking

at what she had found. It was a little miniature of herself. Will had had it painted when they were engaged. She held it tenderly now, as though through the soft palms of her beautiful hands she wanted to send some message that might speak for her to her husband. How different from its predicted fate had been the destiny of this little painted likeness of herself! Will, she realized it as she folded the velvet case together, would be embarrassed to say what he had done with this once so dear possession. He had adored it once, worshiped it. He had declared, and she had believed him, that it would never leave his sight. From the glow of the lamp where she had been standing, her golden hair shot through with light and shining like a halo about her small, graceful head, she moved into the shadow of the library, across the hall, up the stairs, into Will's room, where the absence of habitual belongings gave added relief to the few last things which had been left out on the traveler's dressing table. Among the desultory collection of brushes, pistol cases and amateur medical supplies, she laid the small red case. At the threshold, as she took her outward way, she turned with a gesture of tenderness to the little frame that lay among her husband's things. Ah, if he only would, if he only would take it with him!

And as she lingered in the upper hall, tremulous, not knowing whether to call Will's attention to what she had done and thus spoil the chance of a spontaneous joy, or whether by silence to run the risk of bitter disappointment, she heard the front door bell ring and Griscom's voice sound below as the footman let him in.

Griscom had come before her husband!

And that "last hour" to which she had so deliberately appealed, hoping much, was not to be spent alone with her husband.

Strickland and Griscom made their first prolonged halt at a large ranch in Southern Arizona, towards the end of

December. There the two men separated, Strickland going on down into Mexico, allured by the thought of covering on horseback an altogether unfrequented region, where no railroad had penetrated, while Griscom remained at the La Plata Ranch investigating conditions there. This, at least, was the name he gave it, and the outward expression of his activity bore investigative semblance. His mind, however, was preoccupied with one single vision: that of Dora as she had sat in the library between the lamp and the firelight, her head bowed, her eyes lifted to his when she said good-bye to him . . . That night, that last night at Sherry's, he had declared that he wanted "to get away, *must* get away from New York." Since then he had been traveling steadily westward over plains and mountains, putting thousands of miles between himself and the Atlantic, but New York, or, at least, that one little spot in the great city where he had taken leave of Dora, had come with him every step of the way.

In the saddle habitually from morning until night, Griscom felt horribly the oppression of the first fierce storm that came with such violence as to render traveling on horseback momentarily impracticable. It was a record tempest, which turned the streams into rivers, the rivers into torrents, inundating, deluging, isolating those who lived in the shelter of the La Plata Ranch. When, at last, night closed in with no abatement in the raging rain, it seemed to Eugene Griscom that at any moment the cabin might be set, like an ark, afloat upon the waters. Not so unpleasant an idea that, provided the end should be a hope-bearing messenger. Forty days of oblivion, with all the past wiped out, and then the signal to take a fresh start! . . .

Griscom pursued the illusion. He was sunk deep down in a low armchair before the blazing log fire, whose cheering flames he perceived through the floating veil of blue smoke that circled upward from his cigarette. The wind roared and moaned; the rain beat with insistence, as of some human call, upon

the side windows of the cabin. On the table, in the golden circle of the lamp, lay an album, open. Griscom lifted it nearer to the light, turning the pages whose gray leaves parted to frame a series of little photographs. When he had come to the picture for which he was looking he stopped and studied it with the intensity of gaze that seeks, like some new developer, to emphasize every detail, to bring into clearer relief the too-faint image of a cherished face. The picture was one of Dora Strickland, the only one he possessed. He had snapped it one day down at the Stricklands' place on Long Island. Dora was in a light muslin dress, one arm uplifted to hold an open parasol behind her uncovered head. Griscom watched the curve of her slender waist, the wave of her hair, the beauty of her brow, completing each detail from memory. He remembered so well that day when he had taken the picture—such a happy day! It was before Dora suspected that he cared for her. Then she was more natural, more simple with him. But how could she fail, seeing him almost daily as she had, to perceive that he was absorbed in her, absorbed to distraction, to the exclusion of every other thought? Griscom's arms, outstretched against the sides of the low chair, became tense as the longing swept over him to enfold this fair little form, to crush the light muslin dress as he held fast to his heart the woman he loved.

In the ardor of his reverie he became conscious of a sudden commotion without, which broke the monotony of the storm. One of the ranchmen had stuck his head through the door and was calling out that a messenger had ridden up from La Plata with a dispatch which he would give to no one but Griscom. The gruff note in the man's voice as he said this sounded like a warning, and as Griscom came out upon the porch, dazed by the sudden obscurity, he could scarcely distinguish the dripping figure, against whose somber, soaking garments the little yellow telegram envelope, extended, made a single flash of light that caught

his eye. He seized the paper and tore it open as the boy proffered the explanation of his courage in riding thirty miles on such a night with the simple announcement that "deoun 't the office they calculated such news hadn't no right to wait."

And terrible news it was indeed!

Will Strickland had been shot, shot to death!

"Guadalajara" the telegram was postmarked. An accident had occurred at the *hacienda* where Strickland was staying. While riding with a Mexican the man's gun had jammed against the saddle and had gone off, sending a bullet through Strickland's lungs. They had tried to bring him, wounded, to the town. He had died on the way, expressing the wish that Griscom care for his few belongings and notify his wife. Clear as the message was in the brutality of its terse wording, and indelibly as it remained stamped on Griscom's mind during the next three days, it was only at the end of this time, when he reached Guadalajara, that he realized that his friend was gone, gone forever, and that . . . Ah, no! To that thought he had no right. Face to face with death, there was place for no other feeling than pity for the poor traveler whose wanderings had led him beyond the adventures he had coveted into the greater Unknown. . . . At least, and this was some consolation, in those few brief moments when they had tried to aid the wounded man with all the aid that medical skill could offer, Will Strickland had been able to express the wish that his friend Griscom "tell Dora." There was no message more definite than this, and the poor fellow's belongings added but slightly to the burden with which Griscom was troubling himself.

Yet there was one thing that weighed with an almost living weight in the pocket where Eugene Griscom had thrust it on the first meeting with those who had been with the wounded man when life passed out of him. The money he had about him, his watch, his pistol, his cigarette case, were laid away for safe keeping with no other

feeling than one of reverence for anything that had belonged to a friend now gone forever. But the other object, the simplest, Griscom had not even dared to look at yet. It was only a small red velvet case. But there was a picture in it, and Eugene knew whose the image would be that smiled back at him as he opened the frame. The possession of this little likeness showed a bond closer than any Eugene had thought to exist between Dora and her husband. It was the token of a love kept alive by tenderness, and feeding in return those who retained it. That Dora should have wanted Will to carry this miniature with him, that Will should have needed this image to refresh his eyes as often as they turned, weary from all the disillusionings of unfruitful effort, to rest upon their surest recompense—this was a testimony to their love which made more than ever difficult the sad task of breaking to Dora the tragic news.

Griscom was well on his way towards New York before he lifted a second time from the valise where he had thrust it the little object which held so poignant a place in his thoughts.

It was one afternoon in the train that he drew out, at last, the small case, and slipping the little gilt hook from its clasp, unfolded it. The train was crowded and Griscom's first impulse was to glance hastily about to see whether he had betrayed to some stranger the emotion that shook him through and through.

The image at which he stared was not Dora's!

It was the picture of a woman with masses of dark hair about a small head, with a full under lip to her small, provoking mouth, while the large eyes, exaggerated in their darkness by touches evidently artificial, smiled with a somewhat cynical expression. It was no one whom Griscom had ever seen, not a woman among the Stricklands' friends whom he might have encountered at their house, not the sort of woman one *would* encounter except deliberately. Above all, not the sort of woman whose likeness held any explicable place

among the belongings of one who had separated himself by force of circumstance from all that is not absolutely necessary to his existence.

Eugene Griscom lifted his eyes again from the picture, and as they rested upon the fast speeding landscape by which the train swept onward, he realized that with every revolution of the engine wheels he was coming nearer, nearer to New York, nearer to Dora, and nearer to the decision that he must make with regard to what he should or should not tell her about the other woman's picture.

It was not until several days after his arrival in New York that Eugene was admitted to the Strickland house.

Dora had learned the frightful news through the newspapers, which had got hold of the news and thus, in a brutal manner, spared Griscom the agony of bearing such a message to whom it most concerned.

At last Mrs. Strickland had written a line, a little, helpless scrawl on black-bordered paper, asking Eugene to come to her late that afternoon. It was the first moment, she said in the note, when she had felt able to see anyone.

As Griscom waited in the library, the vision that had haunted him with such persistence rose up again before his eyes: Dora's fair blond head, uplifted as she had said good-bye to him on that last night in New York . . . Now, when she came into the room, it was a shock to see her in her black crape gown, her face as pale as the dew, so different from the Dora of his vision, so far more beautiful. She appeared like some lovely apparition on a holy missal. Griscom could have knelt at her feet in adoration, kissing the hem of her somber gown. But when she had stood for a moment gazing at him in the silent astonishment of sorrow, she held out her slender hand, on whose tapering finger the single circle of gold seemed to weigh heavily.

"It was so good of you to come," she said, drawing about her shoulders a scarf of lace, which enfolded her like a delicate mourning veil, as she took her

old accustomed place before the fire, Griscom sitting opposite her. "I wanted to see you, and yet, for the first few days, I had not the courage." She waited a moment, and then added: "It was such a fearful shock."

Griscom leaned forward, his handsome face full in the light of the fire.

"I'm so dreadfully sorry," he said, "that you should have learned of it in such a way. It's a brutal shame."

She lifted one frail hand, so white!

"Nothing makes any difference," she said. "The way I learned of it couldn't change what I had to learn."

"No, of course not. But"—here Griscom hesitated—"you know it was his wish, Will's wish, that I should break the news to you."

"Was it?" Dora did not take her eyes from Griscom as he continued:

"The only message Will left was that I should 'tell Dora.'"

For a time the flickering flames of the fire played about the two figures. Then presently Dora asked:

"Besides that last message, didn't Will give you any directions about his belongings—I mean the things he had with him?"

"Yes," Eugene nodded; "his request was that I should take care of all his possessions."

"Did you bring them back with you?"

"Yes," Griscom answered hurriedly, "and I would have given them to you at once, but I was waiting for the little line from you which only came today."

Again Dora gazed at Griscom with a long, searching glance that seemed eager to find its own answer to some question which she could not put in words. Then she said:

"Among the few things that Will had with him, was there a"—she hesitated—"a little case with a portrait, a miniature in it?"

She had finished her question so nervously! A chill of pity swept over Griscom. Did Dora know, then, that her husband carried with him the case in which the other woman's portrait was enfolded? Was she seeking, for the mere sake of decency, to reclaim

this outward evidence of her husband's infidelity? Griscom's wonderings were cut short by the next phrase from Dora.

"When Will and I were engaged," she related very simply, "he had a miniature painted of me." She paused a long time here. Eugene could see the tears that glowed as they coursed over her pale cheek. "It's a great comfort now," she went on, brushing her gauzelike handkerchief across her eyes, "to feel that Will took that little picture with him."

Griscom restrained the cry of indignation that rose to his lips. Her picture? But Dora was weeping, her face buried in her delicate hands, which proved an insufficient barrier for so great a force of tears. In a moment, controlling herself and lifting her eyes to Griscom's, she said:

"You have brought me the miniature, have you not?"

Griscom agonized. His voice was like a groan.

"I have brought you the other things: Will's pistol, his wallet, his rings, his watch, his cigarette case, all his little personal belongings." He emptied his pockets as he spoke, spreading out on the library table the objects which he had named. But Dora remained preoccupied. While Griscom displayed these material possessions, taken from her husband, she continued to gaze into the amber ashes on the hearth.

"No," she said, shaking her head, "all those are the impersonal things. What I want is the little velvet case with my picture in it which Will took with him out of love for me."

Griscom thought he detected a slight tone of defiance in these last words, "out of love for me." Perhaps, in the intensity of his emotions he reasoned with rapidity; perhaps, if he himself had not loved Dora, adored her, he might have been frank about this matter of the other woman's picture. As it was, he could not open his lips to speak, and to Dora, who knew, as she had always known instinctively, that he cared for her, his silence appeared like jealousy!

"Oh," she murmured, her handkerchief lifted to her eyes, "please don't let any personal feeling come between us now in this moment of terrible trial!"

Eugene found no words with which to respond. His embarrassment was great, for his own love made it impossible to tell Dora what she waited to hear.

"Say that you will bring me the miniature tomorrow," she pleaded.

Griscom could not answer.

"I beg of you," she insisted. "You cannot know how much depends upon that little image."

It seemed to Eugene that there was a faint smile in Dora's eyes as she urged; it was as though she promised him, knowing that he cared for her, to be happier when she should have within her hands this proof of her husband's attachment.

But Griscom remained silent, and, fatally, Dora misinterpreted his silence. Eugene was piqued, no doubt, at having found in her husband's keeping this proof of his affection for his wife. Instantly she was on the defensive. The very sentiment which Griscom's present silence implied exasperated her, for it seemed to take for granted that she knew he cared, and, worse than that, that she wanted him to care. With the peculiar feminine rapidity in arguing from cause and effect, she determined at once that she must never see Eugene Griscom again.

"It is extraordinary," she said in a hostile tone, "that I should be obliged to this extent to insist upon having what was the most sacred object intrusted by my poor husband to your keeping. Really, it is too remarkable!"

Still Eugene made no attempt to answer this accusation. One thing was fixed in his mind, and that was his resolution, cost what it might, not to show Dora the other woman's picture. And yet, in the very firmness of his determination, he could not distract for one instant his attention from the beauty of the woman before him. Her slender figure lay in the shadows of the deep armchair, her crown of golden

hair reflected the firelight and her pale, exquisite face seemed, like the perfect visage of some ice maiden, to repel the warmth of the hearth's glow. Griscom longed to enfold this ice maiden to his heart and warm her there to happiness. He yearned towards the image that rose before him, frail, helpless and so determined. She was pursuing an ideal, visionary like herself; she was desperately clinging to the unreal. She wanted to console her present sorrow as a wife with the thought that her husband had cared for her to the end, and that she had never failed him. But this was all unreality, shadow, darkness, deception.

Yet what could Griscom say to her?

Dora stirred in the deep armchair, moved forward, became more living in the firelight, like some Galatea come to life. In her mind there was no doubt about the facts of the case: Griscom was keeping the miniature because he could not bear to give it up; he did not want her to have this last token of tenderness. Such a betrayal of confidence was horrible, too horrible!

Later, when Griscom had been gone almost an hour, Dora still sat by the fire in the library. Her husband's friend had given her all the distressing details of the drama that had made her a widow. He had related step by step their journey westward together, their parting at La Plata and the tragic reunion when one of the friends had passed already on beyond rescue.

Yet it was not of these details that Dora Strickland continued to think. Her mind was preoccupied with one sole idea: What was Eugene Griscom's reason for keeping from her her own miniature? She reflected, giving every form to her meditations, but her conclusions were unvarying: Eugene Griscom was keeping the miniature because he loved her, and in a way that she resented; selfishly, to the exclusion even of decency in so delicate a matter. This thought of Griscom's love distracted her more even than her present mourning for her husband's death. Will had been so indifferent! And she had tried so hard to please him!

There was a sense of pitiful compassion for him in her heart as she remembered him. He would have been more happy, she believed, with another sort of woman—someone who understood him better than it had been given her to understand her husband . . .

Several days later Dora wrote Griscom a note. So long as he did not see fit to return the only thing for which she asked, she did not care to see him again. If at any time he were to change his mind, he would be welcome . . . She sealed the letter vigorously after rereading it. She wrote with a nervous, energetic stroke Eugene's address on the envelope. Then she rang for the man servant.

"Have this mailed at once," she said to him. And when he had carried the letter out on a silver tray Dora closed the door behind him and then she sat down by the fire and wept. It seemed to her as though she were fast bound in a prisoner's cell, and that she had shut forever the only aperture through which any light could penetrate.

Griscom saw by the papers that Dora had gone South to Palm Beach. He thought of her in the warm Florida sunlight with the throng of idle pleasure seekers about her. How little the sunlight would avail to warm his snow maiden! How discordant the worldly brilliancy must seem to his somber Dora with her trailing vestments of crape! Eugene thought of her and waited. With the violent faith in the power of the truth he waited. He could not tell Dora, but time would reveal all to her. And in his heart, Griscom cherished flickeringly, uncertainly, the belief which in the matter of love makes patience impossible. He believed, and his belief was sustained by an ardent hope, that he was not perfectly indifferent to Dora. The very severity of her note was an indication. If she cared nothing, why should she feel it a duty so impelling to put him definitely out of her life? Desperately he clung to this argument, but there were moments when he longed to precipitate the

natural evolution of the truth and to break all unwritten bonds, to fly to Dora and to tell her, with worshipful adoration, that she was clinging to a false ideal, a lie.

Dora stayed several weeks at Palm Beach, and then slowly came North with a heavy heart, a heart of lead that made each step onerous. It was May when she reached New York and found herself again in the silent, empty house. Except in her own room, nothing had been touched since Will Strickland's death; her orders to the servants had been strict. Even the confusion on the table in the library had not been repaired. Just as she had left them they lay there now, the pistol, the wallet, the cigarette case—all of Will's things which Griscom had brought back to her—all except the one she cared for most.

The weather was hot and heavy, the first of summer, when she returned. A longing to get away from town took hold of her; the country would give her, perhaps, the freedom for which she longed, freedom from memories. Here in this very library her mind persistently went back to her last talk with Griscom, to her dismissal of him. He was the only person she longed to see. He was the only person she forbade to see her. Meditating in her solitude, she rang for her maid and gave orders that the household be ready the following day to move down to Long Island. The maid received the order with stereotyped servility. But, hesitating on the threshold of Mrs. Strickland's door, she asked:

"Shall we not arrange things in the house before we leave again?"

"What things?" Mrs. Strickland queried, looking about at the furniture and mantelpiece, draped in enveloping silesia, the curtainless windows, the rugless floors. The maid, with her French *politesse*, apologized for her indiscretion.

"Madame does not remember," she said, "that since her sorrow she have not been in once to Mr. Strickland's room. His things are as he left them."

Dora started.

"Very well, Marie," she said, and with a sudden heroic decision she set out at once for the upper floor, where, in fact, as the little French maid had reminded her, she had not even been since the day Will had left the house. Then she had carried the miniature with her. Now she had as only burden a heart so heavy . . .

Marie lifted the window and pushed open the blinds, and with French energy began to bustle about, placing on the bed the few stray objects which had been left by Mr. Strickland in his room. Dora, living over the past, with an agony that wrings the heart, remained by the window gazing out upon the dreary stretch of gray flagstone below. Already New York seemed to be abandoned to the heat, whose scorching rays chased all life to seclusion. She fell into a listless apathy, letting Marie arrange the things as she saw fit. The last time Dora had been in this room was on the eve of Will's departure, and then, when she had come out into the hall, it was Griscom's voice and not her husband's which she had heard asking for her eagerly. Her thoughts dwelt on Eugene . . . How cruel that a misunderstanding should separate her from him at this time! He was the only person whom she longed to see!

"*Voilà, madame!*" It was the brisk exclamation of the French maid which brought Dora Strickland back from her reverie. "Everything is ready, if madame will give a look before I put the things away."

Reluctantly Dora turned towards the little heap of miscellaneous objects which Marie had piled up on the bed. But even the sight of these things, which, since her marriage, she had been accustomed to associate with her husband, did not now distract her thoughts from the trend they had taken. Her attention was keenly alive, and she was on the alert, for it seemed that with the very force of memory just now, the bell must ring and that from the hall below must come the sound of Eugene Griscom's voice . . .

But it was not Griscom's voice that

wrung from Dora a sharp cry—the cry of vanished illusions—the piercing cry of one who, by the very agony of suffering, is made free.

Marie, alarmed, was by her side in an instant, all solicitude, seeking to understand, to succor. But Dora pushed the maid from her. She motioned to her to leave the room, and then, with feverish, frantic fingers, she snatched from the heap of objects on the bed a little dark thing. She crushed it in her palm, murmuring as she beat her hands together:

"Oh, how could he, how could he?"

It was the miniature, the little portrait of herself which she had carried to her husband's room on the evening he left New York. There was no mistaking it. Through the delicate palm of her hand she could feel the rounded sides of the case, the texture of the velvet. And if these were not proof enough, there, as she unfolded the frame, lay the ivory from whose surface her own image smiled back at her. She gazed at it, turning it back and forth in every light, feeling, touching again and again the velvet case, as though in some way she doubted her eyes and wanted the thing to vanish so she need not believe the truth.

But the thing did not vanish. It lay there a tangible testimony.

And as she gazed and gazed at it the whole truth broke gradually in upon her mind. Will, her husband, had not taken with him this picture. Yet in his keeping there was a picture . . . How she had misjudged! What frightful injustice she had done through her longing to be loyal! She understood at last why Eugene Griscom had kept silent.

When Griscom arrived at Mrs. Strickland's place on Long Island it was nearly at the end of May. Her sudden telegram to him that afternoon had come as the call for which he had been waiting, waiting . . .

He had just time to catch the five fifteen train, and when he sprang out of the railway hack which drove him up from the station he caught sight of Dora. She was over on the farther

lawn, standing just as she stood in the little photograph which had been his daily bread at the La Plata Ranch. She was wearing a white muslin dress and one arm was uplifted to hold an open parasol behind her uncovered head. Griscom paused. His happiness was too great to rush in upon it all at once. "*La joie fait peur*," he thought, and for a time, half hidden behind the deep althea hedge, he studied the curve of Dora's slender waist, the beauty of her brow and throat, the splendor of her lustrous hair. Then, as she was moving slowly in his direction, her gown trailing like the unfurled corolla of a morning-glory upon the grass, Griscom came out from his hiding place.

Dora was startled. A deep flush tinged the pallor of her cheek. Very deliberately she closed the sunshade, and extending one hand to Griscom she asked him to come with her into the house. Griscom did not know why Dora had sent for him. There was no word of explanation in her telegram, but he was content merely to be in her presence. He knew that, in some way or other, she had found out the truth, and he was satisfied; he could wait in happiness so long as Dora was near to him.

"I know all, now," she said very simply when they were seated together on the wide veranda which faced the dunes and the sea beyond. "I have known for almost three weeks. Yes," she nodded at a gesture from Griscom. "But I could not send for you at once; you understand."

Her eyes met Griscom's and rested for one moment as the *mouette* rests upon the wave's crest after a weary length of flight. Then, looking outward towards the far horizon of the sea she continued what she had to say:

"I will tell you some time my sad proof of the truth. Just now I would rather not speak of that."

Eugene did not insist. He felt that, by his silence more than in any other way while Dora was telling him, he could show his reverent tenderness.

"Answer me," she said, speaking with some difficulty, as her lips trembled

nervously, "Will had in his keeping when the end came a miniature, did he not?"

"Yes," Griscom responded, his voice very low.

"And"—it took Dora a long time to put this last question into words—"the portrait was not of me. That I know. It was the portrait of another woman, was it not?"

Eugene besought her not to urge.

"Don't ask me," he pleaded. "I did not show it to you, not even when my own happiness depended on it. Isn't that sufficient answer?"

"Thank you," Dora smiled faintly.

"You thank me? For what?"

"For everything," she said, reaching towards him one of her delicate hands. Griscom folded it in both of his, bowed his head over it, pressing the cool palm against his brow, and, as it lay unre-sisting, he touched his lips to the fingers, to the wrist, and let his kisses run along the veins that traced their tinge of blue against the white. And Dora still did not withdraw it.

"How brave you are!" Griscom murmured, looking deep into her eyes.

"Brave?"

"Yes. Don't you know that it takes an awful lot of courage to be happy?"

Dora smiled.

"It does," Eugene affirmed, "and for a woman above all. You've been as loyal as a soldier to what you thought was right, but now you know the truth, you have accepted it; you're not going to fight it off the way most women would."

"How do you know I'm not?" Dora asked, turning her hand gently against Eugene's.

"Just by the way you've let your hand rest in mine without snatching it away. You won't take it away now, will you, Dora? Give it to me to keep forever. Give me the chance to make you happy. Can't you feel my adoration, my tenderness, beloved?"

Dora held out the other little hand as answer.

"Take them both," she said, "and forever."



THE DREAM CHILD

"He being dead, yet speaketh."

By ANNA E. FINN

HE comes in dreams (that are not dreams at all)
When the long shadows from departing day
Cast strange, deep lines upon the things of clay;
When the bright fire burns within the hall
And the great clock that standing straight and tall
Tells of the measured passage of the hours.

He comes again, like purple, velvet flowers
Half hidden by the snows that seem their pall,
I see his eyes—mysterious, divine.
The sunrise is his face—a thing too fine,
Save for the spirit's inner sense to see.
The moonlight and the starlight speak of him;
The twilight holds him, dreamlike, tender, dim.
At morn, at noon, at night, he comes to me.

THE GARGOYLE

By GEORGE MIDDLETON

CHARACTERS

CRAIG ARLISS (*a novelist*)

VAUGHAN BLAKESLEE (*a returned wanderer*)

PLACE: *A house in the suburbs.*

TIME: *The present.*

SCENE—*The summer moonlight flowing through a large French balcony window at the right discloses the dim outlines of a curious, clover-shaped studio. A door, which one learns opens upon a stairway, is faintly seen at the back. The light from a lamp upon a mantel-piece near a bedroom door at the left suggests more clearly the interesting collection of prints and curios placed along the wall. Some bookcases are noticed amid the strange mélange of tasteful if somewhat eccentric furniture. At a table near the window, ARLISS is seated writing persistently. His cigar has gone out, and as he pauses to relight it, one observes that he is tall, almost emaciated and past the meridian of life. His dark, deep-set, inquiring eyes seem the only thing alive about his sallow, ascetic face. His thin, sensitive lips are bloodless through continual compression, and his distinguished forehead loses itself in the lingering masses of tired, faded hair. As he resumes writing, it is seen that his fingers are long and nervous, really conscious of the things they touch. He continues under apparent inspiration for some time; the clock striking four finally interrupts him. He looks up, realizing it is late. He glances out of the window as though awaiting somebody, half grunts to himself, searches among his papers and finds a telegram which he rereads for reassurance. The faint ring of a bell is heard. He starts up toward the door at the back, but hesitates and goes to the window instead.*

ARLISS (*calling out*)

Vaughan! Vaughan! At last! Wait; I'll throw the key. An old habit, eh? (*He takes a key off the table and throws it from the window.*) There, right before you! You haven't forgotten the trick of that door? (*He takes the lamp from the table and goes up to the door at the back, opening it and stepping outside on the stairs. He holds the lamp above him.*) Close it. Be careful of that turn. Seventh step. I'm always stumbling over it myself.

(*A slight pause. ARLISS comes into the room as VAUGHAN BLAKESLEE enters. ARLISS lifts the lamp high and the two men face each other in its light. Another pause. VAUGHAN BLAKESLEE, still in his early thirties, of handsome if somewhat underlined features, gives indication, through a certain marked unkemptness, of the same native refinement of birth and sensibilities. ARLISS calmly offers his hand. VAUGHAN does not take it.*)

VAUGHAN

We are alone?

ARLISS

Quite.

VAUGHAN (*still at the door*)

The servants?

ARLISS

Are evils I am compelled to tolerate only in the daytime. (VAUGHAN *sighs in relief and enters the room. ARLISS closes the door and comes down slowly to the telegram.*) You said it was something "important."

VAUGHAN

I came straight from the train.

ARLISS

Oh, don't apologize! I'm a night owl. I've been working. (*Referring to manuscript.*) Poor creatures! They're having a hard time . . . Oh, pardon, and your luggage?

VAUGHAN

I've brought none. I'm not going to stay.

ARLISS

Then you haven't reached the bottom yet. (*Pause.*) I never persuade.

VAUGHAN

I hardly think you will be able to, *this time.*

ARLISS

Your room has always been waiting for you these—let me see—it's two years, isn't it?

VAUGHAN

In time, yes.

ARLISS

Whenever you are ready you can take up your old life.

VAUGHAN

My old life, ha! ha! I'd have to be the same person I was, wouldn't I?

ARLISS

I accept the correction. Your new life dating from today.

VAUGHAN (*sarcastically*)

Have you advice to give me about that, too?

ARLISS

Not precisely, but I might hazard a guess, though, that when you *are* ready you should accept Old Gambrill's offer.

VAUGHAN (*surprised*)

That is still open to me? Even after these last two years?

ARLISS (*lighting a cigar*)

Certainly. Old Gambrill understands, too.

VAUGHAN

Understands?

ARLISS

Yes.

VAUGHAN (*grimly*)

I wonder.

(*He walks up and down.*)

ARLISS

Maturity is only mental vanity, eh? But this is a good chance for you, Vaughan. I'm not much on business affairs, but I think your father would have approved. It's—I have it here; I only remember moods, never facts. (*He takes up a memorandum.*) Twenty-five hundred at the start—six months' travel—'rikshas, mules and so forth—hard work, but full of color, I should think—stimulating, shoulder-rubbing—

VAUGHAN (*crossing close to him*)

Do you know where I've come from?

ARLISS

Yes. From the Devil. You went to shake his hand; he looked at your palm, smiled, shook his head and regretfully sent you back to earth.

VAUGHAN (*bitingly*)

Something made me come to you.

ARLISS (*covertly watching the younger man, measuring him and purposely drawing him out*)

I have been expecting you for many weeks.

VAUGHAN

I said nothing about coming in my letters. You received them all?

ARLISS

Every one of them. It was good of you to number them as I suggested. In spite of your bad handwriting, I followed you in great detail day by day.

VAUGHAN

Why didn't you answer them?

ARLISS

I sent my card and a cheque.

VAUGHAN

Do you know why I took your money?

ARLISS

The answer is obvious.

VAUGHAN

I took it because I despised you.

ARLISS

That's splendid psychology.

VAUGHAN

Oh, you can sneer at me now! But how could you—how could you keep sending it to me? How could you let me go on and on—

ARLISS

What you were doing interested me. I was always glad to hear.

VAUGHAN

Glad?

ARLISS

Yes. Even after your letters came, so eagerly awaited, I sharpened my pleasure by placing them on the book-case—there. All day they would cry out to me, but never till night did I release their tumbling words. Then, under the black mantle, I lived with you gloriously through it all. For to me your letters meant experience—sensation.

VAUGHAN

So that was why you did it?

ARLISS

Alone in my chair I felt the quick rush of your life. My lips bled with your wine, my ears burned with your music and the rouge of your women rubbed my cheeks.

VAUGHAN

And I paid. I lived it. I suffered—while you sat comfortably alone in your chair. Ha! ha!

ARLISS (*half to himself*)

That was the only way I could do it.

VAUGHAN

So I earned the money you sent me. I was experiencing for you. I was burning the wick that you might see. I was material—copy. Oh, I might have guessed, for I heard you say once: "Creation sprang from suffering."

ARLISS

And you very rightly deduce it is generally somebody *else* who pays.

VAUGHAN

I've paid long enough. I didn't come to take up my life nor Gambrell's offer, but for a settlement with you—an accounting.

ARLISS

The money was not enough?

VAUGHAN

No. You must give me back something you have taken from me.

ARLISS

What?

VAUGHAN (*earnestly*)

My ideals.

ARLISS (*starting*)

Ideals? Brave images in the sand until a wave has kissed them.

VAUGHAN

My self-respect.

ARLISS

The vainest of all vanities.

VAUGHAN

My purity, my sense of honor, my dreams. You must give them back to me. I want my faith in things again. I want to be the old Vaughan. I'm empty now—empty. I have nothing left.

ARLISS

But disgust.

VAUGHAN

Yes, disgust.

ARLISS

And something else.

VAUGHAN

What else? Only pain—pain in my heart for every living thing that breathes.

ARLISS

That's it. That's it.

VAUGHAN

Yes; down in the depths I've wept for all the sins of the world, for I've been part of them all. I've felt the thrill of the thief and the hate of the beggar, for I, too, in my bitterness, have felt the impelling impulse, and when the impulse was born my judgment died. God! Don't you see I've lost my sense of right and wrong? I'm stripped—stripped! (*He sinks bitterly, burying his head in his arms.*)

ARLISS

Aren't your phrases a bit overseasoned? That's my literary prerogative. Come now, aren't you a trifle melodramatic?

VAUGHAN (*rising with deliberate calm*)

You shall take me seriously; you shall see I'm in earnest. I'm not a youth any longer, but a man with life washed out of him. *You* are responsi-

ble—do you hear?—for what I am. I was beginning to find myself, to argue myself out of it—beginning to kill my grief. The right word from you would have saved me—but you made me go out into the world, knowing the kind of life I would lead, encouraging me in it. And now I've come back for an accounting. (*He comes closer with great earnestness.*) Give me back what I've lost. Can you? Give it back, all of it, for I'm dead without it, and it is you alone who have killed me; and you must answer—first. (*He slowly draws a pistol from his pocket.*)

ARLISS (*enthusiastically*)

I have saved you—I have. Now you have reached the bottom. I'm sure of it. Don't you see, Vaughan, what I've kept for you, what I've given you, too; don't you see it?

VAUGHAN (*after a pause*)

I suppose you think I will halt because I do not understand.

ARLISS (*with great earnestness*)

If I do not make you understand, you must do to me as you intended to.

VAUGHAN

Must?

ARLISS

Yes; for if I had destroyed all in you I should demand it.

VAUGHAN (*hesitating, then putting the pistol upon the table*)

Well?

ARLISS (*vigorously*)

Where is your strength, your conviction? I sha'n't respect your intention if you are so easily turned from it. (*VAUGHAN reaches for the pistol. ARLISS covers it.*) It's not death I'm afraid of, but life. It would solve my problem and not help yours.

VAUGHAN (*pointing sarcastically to the manuscript*)

You talk like one of your characters.

ARLISS (*smiling*)

My characters are only my different attitudes toward life. (*VAUGHAN drops the pistol on the table. There is a pause while ARLISS fingers it.*) This has flashed like the proverbial symbol between us. Give it to me of your own free will, and I shall know that you take up Gambrill's offer and start with

your head high and your manhood sure.

VAUGHAN (*savagely*)

There is no use. I tell you I have no will left, only impulse.

ARLISS (*quickly*)

Then I'll meet your spasmodic melodrama halfway. I'll gamble with you for that pistol and all it means.

VAUGHAN

Gamble? Ha! ha! How? By "matching" miseries like pennies?

ARLISS

That just describes it.

VAUGHAN

Is this some scene from your new novel?

ARLISS

It's a bit too real and too unnatural.

VAUGHAN

A few moments cannot alter my intention. (*He sits down.*)

ARLISS (*with force*)

You must resent every word I tell you; you must believe me in spite of yourself. Then only will you be convinced that what I did for you was right.

VAUGHAN

Then you do acknowledge it was deliberate? That with a purpose you sent me out to be what I was, to become what I am?

ARLISS

Yes, deliberate.

VAUGHAN

Why?

ARLISS

There was a chance that way. Otherwise, you might have become—

VAUGHAN (*sarcastically*)

—a famous novelist, a great success; "one of the mountain peaks," they call you.

ARLISS

The mountain peaks are lonely.

VAUGHAN

As if loneliness were hard!

ARLISS

My sort of loneliness is.

VAUGHAN

Who's melodramatic now?

ARLISS

Hear me out. Will you change places with me? I would take your life

gladly, stripped and naked as you think it is, if you could take up mine, full as it seems to you.

VAUGHAN

I suppose I ought to ask you to—

ARLISS

To show my side of the penny? Yes. Trite as it may seem, I was young once.

VAUGHAN (*bitterly*)

Like me; I know that beginning. Go on.

ARLISS

And I soon made the astonishing discovery that the easiest way to avoid the petty worries of life was to deny their reality. Instead of absorbing them, I squeezed them out of my daily living. I—I—

VAUGHAN

But what has this to—

ARLISS

Wait. I didn't realize the tyranny of this comfortable habit until I faced the first conscious climax of my life. (*Stops in recollection: VAUGHAN becomes interested.*) Why drape the fact and bury it beneath pretty flowers? My heart was pounded by the tiny fists of a woman.

VAUGHAN (*with impulsive sympathy*)

You, too? I never knew.

ARLISS

How beautifully your pity leaped toward me in spite of yourself! I like that. You are real.

VAUGHAN

I know what it is. Was it the same sort of thing as mine?

ARLISS

I loved her.

VAUGHAN

So your heart was broken, too?

ARLISS (*with deep conviction*)

No; if it only had been!

VAUGHAN (*incredulously*)

If it only had been?

ARLISS

Yes. But I wouldn't let it—I wouldn't. To kill the pain which was ready to flow into every fiber of my being, I shot my mind through it. It became something I had imagined, something I had read or written; for I simply and deliberately and cruelly denied its reality. It was born dead.

VAUGHAN

But that was strength.

ARLISS

That was cowardice.

VAUGHAN

Cowardice? How do you know?

ARLISS

By the punishment which lurked in the reaction. I found I had no longer the power to keep real any feeling I wanted to feel.

VAUGHAN

But you did not cease to feel?

ARLISS

No, only I felt differently. I felt through my mind. In other words, I felt self-consciously. It's a bit subtle; but, to describe it in other words, my emotional life became something apart from me, something I watched and guided—something which always knew I watched and guided. I never forgot how I *should* feel, only it was emotion parented by my mind and my sense of the situation—never directly, by the stimulus itself. I still had red blood that would leap to red lips, but there was thought in my kiss. I still had eyes that would weep, but no tear fell from its own weight of sadness.

VAUGHAN (*thoughtfully*)

That recalls—

ARLISS

I could not accept from the unsuspecting world either praise or blame for my actions, because I questioned the motives which prompted them. What days and nights they were as I sat alone beginning to doubt my own sincerity! There is no misery you have tasted greater than that. *Was I sincere?* I wormed my life with that question. I couldn't dodge that. And to myself I was soon forced to acknowledge I was a hypocrite—an actor whose grimaces made his emotion.

VAUGHAN

But couldn't you do anything?

ARLISS

I fought against it. How I tried to be as real to myself as I seemed to others! But in every action, every word, every look which sprang so self-consciously from me, I saw a gargoyle leer its relentless question: "Are you

sincere?" Then I resolved to crush its thick lips, to escape forever from my own mind, for once to abandon myself to a life of the senses—a life without thought—to feel without question gloriously and nakedly, to become an elemental being who could react properly, without indirection, from every stimulus—who could touch and be burned—who could be cut and bleed—who could suffer pain—

VAUGHAN (*eagerly*)

Then, what did you do?

ARLISS

I threw myself into a woman's life. I stifled each cry of treason to the memory of the other love. I went on and on with words, gestures, tears and sighs, frowning over the same roads and highways seeking this new heart. But when her love paused and her calm eyes claimed mine in return, I found all I really had to give her was the same conscious lack of sincerity. I had not changed. It had been too late. I had become an emotional hypocrite with nothing real about the things I knew I said so prettily. And when I looked at her—horror-stricken, I saw I had burned her fires to ashes.

VAUGHAN

You ruined her life?

ARLISS

Absolutely.

VAUGHAN

How terrible!

ARLISS

How damnable! (*During the long pause which follows, the dawn gently tints the room. The clock strikes the hour of five.*) After that nothing remained for me but to become impersonal—to soil no other life with my thin fingers—to give nothing—to seek nothing—to get nothing—to be emotionally alone, detached.

VAUGHAN

That's what you meant by loneliness.

ARLISS

Yes. One reality was left—my imagination, my characters, my creations.

VAUGHAN

And other people's letters.

ARLISS

Yes. Your life in them was real to me because it was not mine. (*Softly*) So you see, when it comes to "matching miseries," as you call it, I—

VAUGHAN (*almost tenderly*)

I see you are not so happy as I thought.

ARLISS (*looking at him cautiously and feeling his way*)

But you understand why?

VAUGHAN

Yes.

ARLISS

Only the more intuitive than you would have grasped this without living it. You understand by a reborn instinct; because it is an emotional echo.

VAUGHAN (*half mysteriously*)

Where before have I—

ARLISS

Back before the dawn of your new life—you yourself felt it.

VAUGHAN

That's so—that's so. That's what kept me spellbound listening; it seemed as though you were explaining to me my old self before—

ARLISS

Before I sent you out in the world.

VAUGHAN (*excitedly*)

No, no; you're baffling me with your subtleties. You're trying to confuse me; to make me forget *why* I've come. But I haven't forgotten. (*Pointing towards the pistol.*) You haven't convinced me I should alter my intention—for what has all this to do with me? I'm not that way now. Thank God, I'm not like you. But answer me—why did you send me out?

ARLISS (*clearly and emphatically*)

To save you from becoming what I am.

VAUGHAN (*almost dazed with the idea*)

Would I have become—

ARLISS

Yes. I am the logical end of what in you was only a tendency.

VAUGHAN

But are you sure?

ARLISS (*indignantly*)

Only my sureness excuses my conduct. I had one chance to save myself—when my grief first struck me. I

could have shaken myself free of myself then, and then only, in that molding moment. You were like me in all things. I saw you were killing your grief as I did, letting your awakening literary sense master and direct your emotions—dodging the pain of it all. I couldn't let you come to my end—to my civilized soul misery. So I took the risk to make you what you are now, and I sent you out to find yourself, as you have, in the mud and in the elemental.

VAUGHAN

But you've failed—I'm ruined, anyway.

ARLISS

No, no.

VAUGHAN

Yes, yes. You've saved me from one thing to toss me to another. You have no right to play with a human life. I can't forgive you. I must still claim my accounting. You've shown me your emptiness, but look at mine. You've shown me what you've saved me from, but what have you given me instead? What have you given me?

ARLISS

Everything I have not. Everything except my fame, which I have bought by losing all you have. (*He speaks with exaltation.*) This dawn is yours, but not mine; you have drowned your grief in its colors. The paths of day and night are yours, but not mine, for over them you have dragged your pain. You've soaked the world with your tears; the world has become yours. But nothing is mine. You are the humanity about you; you own its blood, its sweat and its heartbeat. I own nothing. You've bought them for all time by feeling them properly, by feeling them sincerely. For that I'd give all my fame—just to be able to feel without self-consciousness—to feel as you, only because I felt.

VAUGHAN (*spiritually moved*)

Yes, yes; what you say must be true. I felt it out there, but it lay in my heart seeking a voice. Your words have let something free within. So that's what my grief has given me—the world!

ARLISS

I staked all that I might make you see.

VAUGHAN

I do now. (*Enthusiastically*) But in speaking like this, you've given the lie unto yourself. You've given me a release; it is my turn to give you yours.

ARLISS

You can't—you can't. Nobody can free me from myself.

VAUGHAN

I can. You've been living with a false idea of yourself. You're not what you think you are. You say you don't feel! Why, you too are thrilling still with the words you've given me. They are you, you, you!

ARLISS (*with grief*)

No, I was only feeling in your place.

VAUGHAN

But you say you don't suffer. You are suffering now!

ARLISS (*sinking into a chair*)

I suffer only because I do not suffer properly.

VAUGHAN (*looking at him awed*)

What a tragedy!

ARLISS

No; only a penalty. All "actors" pay it, once they honestly understand themselves.

VAUGHAN

Actors! If you haven't changed from what you were, you must be acting now. Have you assumed these attitudes to save yourself from my intention? (*Aggressively*) Have you spoken because you've felt it, or because you knew it was the thing to say?

ARLISS (*with deep pain*)

But you are convinced that what I did for you—

VAUGHAN

No! I can't be unless I know you are sincere. (*ARLISS winces. VAUGHAN leans towards him across the table.*) Tell me, have you been sincere with me? Are you sincere now?

ARLISS (*almost pitifully*)

Won't you show me that you believe I am? Won't you please let me feel I am sincere—just for once? (*He looks at VAUGHAN, who, after a pause, slowly pushes the pistol towards him. ARLISS smiles faintly, sunk deep in his chair.*)

SLOW CURTAIN.

HER PREDECESSOR

By ANNIE E. P. SEARING

GODFREY TRENOR'S face was an iron mask until he smiled, and then you saw what it was that made him beloved of his friends as he was hated by his enemies. It was a kind of implacability that was behind the good as well as the evil in his nature. His wife had once photographically described him as "an amiable, high-tempered man of an adorable ugliness." As for his age, he might have been well preserved at fifty or a bit gone off at forty.

His wife was a different sort of creature altogether. She was much younger, of a tiny, exquisitely modeled type. A lifelong residence in Paris had not robbed her of her birthright of New England directness of speech, and absolute simplicity of mind and persistency of purpose. Everything about her was finished, correct, entirely as it should be, from her ruffles to her religion. Even her prettiness was perfectly logical, and you did not need to look twice to see why. She was entirely without a sense of humor; but the lack was made good by keen observation and quick-wittedness.

As she sat opposite her husband in the pink satin efflorescence of their hotel sitting room, drinking her coffee while he glanced over a newspaper in the intervals of his scarcely tasted breakfast, she penetrated with her accustomed shrewdness to the heart of the depression behind his silence. She knew perfectly well that he comprehended not a word of the printed page he held, that he had tasted almost nothing of the food before him, and that he was hardly conscious of her presence.

Agnes Trenor's love for her husband was hardly to be called a passion—she was not a woman of passions. It was more like the uplooking, self-effacing devotion of an animal; let us say "dog-like" as more comprehensible, though others of the brute creation are capable of the same exaggeration of attachment. The absorption of love so possessed her that she had no expression of her inner life except in its relation to his. So it was that behind the outer crust of his silence she was quick to divine his suffering, and for the past few days she had been aware of some crisis, making known to her without a word between them that he was somewhere in a place apart, and that a place of lamentation. If only it were not that place in which she had no share—his past!

She pushed back her plate, and with elbows on the table rested her chin in her clasped hands, while she looked at him long and searchingly. Her eyes were like gray agates, and they stared from under her high arched brows with the directness of a child's at his unconscious face. At last she spoke:

"Godfrey, when we closed the chateau it was I who wanted to come over here instead of going directly back to Paris as we have always done—you remember?"

"Yes?" He put down his paper with vague, deprecatory attention.

"And you did not want to come. You only yielded at last to please me, because I had not been in America since I was a very little girl, and I wanted so much to come. You had not been back in—did you say it was fifteen years?"

His face had a set, inlooking expression, as he repeated after her in automatic assent: "It was fifteen years."

"At first, Godfrey, just at first, you know, you seemed to enjoy it as much as I did, though of course it can't be to you, as it is to me, like seeing a foreign country. At all the dinners and receptions you have seemed to find it as jolly as I did, until lately, quite lately, you have changed. Perhaps—I begin to think I have asked too much of you. It may be it is too painful."

The man pushed back his chair and turned his face away from her towards the window, and where the light fell across his profile she noticed his nostrils contracting, a little facial trick he had when anything moved him to annoyance. But she went resolutely on to her goal as was her wont.

"I don't like to distress you, dear, but I am going to ask of you one favor more."

Then he turned to her and smiled, that radiant, melting smile that made his invincible power of persuasion.

"Anything within my power to give, little woman, you shall have, no matter what it costs me, and whether in pain or dollars."

"Well, it's only a question. You need not answer if you'd rather not. It is about the tabooed subject. Have you seen Her?"

It seemed a very long time to her before he answered. "Yes," he said at last, and his voice and expression were alike cold and dead, "I have seen her. And now that I have granted your request, will you oblige me by not alluding to the matter again?"

She passed around the table to where he sat bowed in his chair and kissed him before she went out of the room. She might not speak again, but her guess was right. All that day she went about mulling over in her mind the one trenchant fact: the Other Woman was in New York and he had seen her! They had thought her half a world away, and she was at their very door—the wife of his youth!

There would certainly be no further word of the matter. Agnes Trenor

would obey her husband's wishes. Indeed, until today she had never touched on the tender topic, but had loyally kept the compact they had made on their marriage. She had understood, perfectly that she was marrying a divorced man. The main facts were explicitly declared: the first wife's abandonment, her subsequent marriage, her present residence in California, and the complete upheaval of Trenor's life, resulting in his establishing himself thereafter abroad. It was agreed that the past should be expunged between them. It should be as if the woman had died. The years since it all happened seemed to the girl's youth so very long, the chance of any meeting so very slight, that it had not occurred to her as a difficulty worth reckoning in planning the New York winter. She realized that there would of necessity be some revival of old associations, here where the former life had been lived, but she believed the new had wiped out the old—and now! Her husband was plainly stirred as she had never seen him by the woman who was to have been "as one dead!" Why, oh, why do the dead come back?

As she went over and over the monstrous, unheard-of mischance of such a meeting, there grew within her the unappeasable desire to know something of that old life of his, something of the woman who had wrecked it, but who had once possessed his heart. What was she like in those old days? What was she like now? Never before had she cared to know any of these things. They had seemed, beside her own great love, like the elements of an old, forgotten dream. But suddenly, in the time it took him to utter that pain-fraught "Yes," all her relation to the whole matter changed. She was not lacking in courage to meet this enemy that confronted her, but she wanted the light of knowledge—she felt the helplessness of fighting a foe in the dark. The first poignant pain of that past in which she had no part came to her with the realizing sense of the strong hold this ghost of the old love had upon her husband. She saw that he was

moved to the very depths, and as the days went on she longed more and more for some knowledge of this woman who had preceded her. Was she faded now, a withered rose? Or was she like so many of these New World matrons, blooming still, defying time?

One night at a dinner a solution of her problem was flashed upon her in the answer she got to a question she had put to the youth on her left:

"Who is that Mrs. Henrotin one meets everywhere?"

"She's the widow of an army officer and she knows everybody worth knowing from ocean to ocean. There was some sort of a 'past,' I believe, but everything goes if you know how to carry it off—and she knows! By Jove, she has her New York at the ends of her fingers as she has the rest of the continent!"

This was the clue. A woman who had for a long time known "everybody" probably knew what she wanted most to hear, and a woman of the world could be a discreet confidant. With characteristic persistency Agnes Trenor set about her object, and before long had accomplished it—that of knowing Mrs. Henrotin intimately enough to ask her questions. She found that lady ready in her indifferent fashion to meet her halfway.

As far as Mrs. Henrotin's outward personality was concerned, she was of a type whose charms do not depend on beauty, and she had arrived at that stationary period of life where the question of age seems to rest for a time in abeyance. She was graceful, slim, sinuous, with low-dressed red hair and a long neck. Her main attraction was that rarest of gifts, a perfect speaking voice. It held caressing inflections that give the cruellest words a certain sweetness. Mrs. Trenor found herself drawn to her side as much by those melting tones as by the hope of a help she at last believed herself to be on the eve of attaining.

She found herself one day drinking tea with her, any more substantial form of hospitality between them having somehow proved abortive in

the pressure of social engagements. Mrs. Henrotin had the art to make her tiny drawing-room a perfect setting for herself and the sort of small dramas her cleverness could devise for the amusement of the brief season in town.

Tête-à-tête tea with her was a privilege not often accorded to her own sex, she being essentially not a woman's woman. As she moved her jeweled fingers about the tray the maid placed beside her chair, Agnes Trenor recognized instinctively that here was one who by some inborn necessity had always held the center of the stage, must always have experienced or at least have understood the play that went on about her, and must inevitably have touched at some point that poor played-out drama of her husband's.

As she sipped her tea and looked into the blaze of the fire, she took her resolve, and with characteristic directness drove straight to her point.

"I came here today," she said, "to talk to you of things very personal to my life, and to get your help if I can."

"Really!"—the voice was honey soft as the owner of it moved a little from her languid pose among the cushions—"if I could, of course, but I don't quite see how."

"My husband was married before—you perhaps knew that?"

"Yes," answered at once the honeyed drawl, "I did know that."

"Then I dare say you also know that there was a divorce. We never speak of it; we agreed not to—the mere mention of it makes him so unhappy. Any chance of his seeing her seemed impossible when I urged him to come here, as she lived in California, but I am sorry to say the impossible has happened: they have met!"

Mrs. Henrotin nestled back again amid her pillows, from which she had partly risen, and reaching for a small hand screen, she held it before her face as if the fire were too insistent, before she spoke again. "What reason have you to think that they have met?"

"I divined it by the change in my husband. For days he has been so preoccupied, so shut away in his

thoughts, and at last I asked him just that one question, and he told me. I can ask him no more, and I want to know so many things! I somehow thought, after all these years—yes I *hoped*,” and she looked towards her companion with the round-eyed longing of a child, “I *hoped* she was dead! But instead she comes back, as if she had not already caused suffering enough, and like a ghost that walks, she haunts his happiness with me!”

“It is often so,” was the comment from the sofa; “people are so inconsiderate about dying, and the dead so distressingly persistent in coming back!”

Mrs. Trenor wondered vaguely whether the woman was ironical or baldly cruel, but beyond a brief pause she was not stayed in her purpose.

“Did you ever know her very well?”

The question seemed to open vistas of reflection, for Mrs. Henrotin sat up and poured herself a fresh cup of tea, readjusted herself to a comfortable position and stirred in her two lumps of sugar before she answered:

“Yes and no—I have seen a great deal of her, but I can’t say I ever knew her very well. Her story, oh, yes; but herself? I doubt if anyone has ever really known her—to understand her. Certainly not Godfrey Trenor—and as certainly not she herself.”

“Was she beautiful?”

“Oh, dear, no; not in the least—you may rest assured on that point. Her looks were not to be mentioned in the same breath with yours!”

There was a sting in these smooth words that brought a flush to Mrs. Trenor’s cheek.

“She must have had attractions,” she said, and she could not have told whether defensively of herself or of her predecessor, “charm of some sort. Was she clever?”

“Clever! My dear, she was a fool—a thorough-going fool! As for ‘charm,’ I suppose you would call it that. She was possessed of that malign gift of the gods that women long for more than for beauty or goodness or brains, the lure that draws the hearts of men. As I think over her detestable history, I

should say that she was bound from the beginning to go wrong; it was written in her stars!”

There was silence between them for a time, and when Agnes Trenor spoke there was a quiver in her voice that suggested tears.

“Do you know, there are times when I have it in my heart to be sorry for her! When I think what a perfect thing his love has made my life, when I think what a treasure she lost!—I have never been jealous of her, though I know he loved her devotedly—it has always been to me like another life, gone, wiped out—always until now, since I know he has seen her; and oh, if the mere sight of her has still such power of misery over him, what am I to do! You see I really know so little of it all—how am I to make way against an enemy that is but a specter, the memory of the past—and not even that to me?”

She paused to recover herself after the unwonted passion of her utterance, and then added gently: “And she must have come into great suffering afterward, when she realized—poor thing!”

Mrs. Henrotin set down her cup and again took up her hand screen. When she spoke her voice had lost all its sweetness and taken on a new note of harshness.

“Whatever you do,” she said, “don’t pity her! She didn’t—she doesn’t deserve it! As for suffering”—her laugh made Agnes Trenor shrink—“well, rather! You are young—you do not understand the logic of evil. If you did, you would know that women of her sort always come to the place, sooner or later, where the utter squalor of life as they have carved it out for themselves makes the prettiest sort of punishment—makes a hell for them to dwell in! But don’t waste your sympathy on her. She did not ‘lose’ her treasure; she threw it away. Just as lightly as if you were to take those jewels you wear and toss them out of the window of this firelit room into the mud of the gutter below, just as lightly, with gaiety and a smile, she tossed away the whole fabric of happiness! And he

was happy with her—that remains true. They were both young, he working hard to get rich for her sake, but constantly indulging her beyond his means. They had the prettiest of homes—his bird's nest he used to call it—high up in an apartment house overlooking the great square. He thought all day of a quiet evening with her, and she planned all day how to avoid it. You see that fatal dower of hers bred an insatiable desire to exercise it, and society is the field where the game is played. The elements of disaster were locked in the union of two such temperaments."

There was something so coldly analytical in the even swiftness with which Mrs. Henrotin told the story that her listener felt herself moved to an inner championship of the woman who was under the pitiless scalpel. The voice went calmly on:

"She came to chafe madly against his very faith in her. If she had been a good woman, the ideal in which he had enthroned her would have been her protection; as she was a bad woman it became her prison. When she felt she could bear it no longer she broke away, and the manner of her doing it was of a piece with the innate savagery of her nature. Perhaps you will wonder how she could bring herself to tell it, even years after—but the telling of it, with all the bitterness of its humiliation, was in a way expiatory.

"They were sitting together, he and she, by the evening lamp. She made that room so vivid to me that I can see it in all its smallest detail, the *escritoire* he had given her on her last birthday, the water color of a moonlit lake that hung over the mantel, and the piano where the rack held an open page of Schubert's songs—she used to sing then. There was a bunch of gardenias sent her that day by the Other Man—she could never afterward bear the odor of those flowers, and she smashed the exquisite vase that held them into a thousand pieces—but that was long after, and I must not get ahead of my story.

"So they were sitting, he with his

book, she with some futile feminine occupation of the hands, when he stopped to cut a page, and as he looked up he caught her eyes and smiled."

Agnes Trenor felt her heart contract within her with instant recognition of what she felt this cold narrator could not know—the glory of his smile!

"She said it was something in that smile," the recital went on, "a kind of beaming, exuberant sense of possession, of completion, of full knowledge of her inmost soul, a sort of *stupidity* in his love that drove her at that radiant moment to the irreparable!

"I don't know that I at all make you understand. I did not understand her myself; she was such a fool—such an inconsistent fool in her very wickedness, but just then, by a mad destructive impulse she determined to be true to her own evil self—to cast off that oppressive mantle of goodness with which he was always investing her—to be free, even in chaos! She never knew till that moment how closely she had listened; there had never crystallized in her vain mind any definite assent to the secret love making with which she had been dallying for months, until then. In a flash she decided; she pulled the trigger of her intention! Leaning towards him across the lamp-light she looked straight into his smiling eyes and told him she no longer loved him! He thought it was a joke, remonstrated at first gently at its unkindness, and then with annoyance at what he called the poor taste of it, but over and over she drove it home until he was forced to believe her—just a calm statement, as emotionless as if I were to say to you, 'The day is cold,' or 'That hurdy-gurdy down there in the street that plays "L'Elisir d'Amore" is off the key,' and at last she added with the inconsequence of a child, 'I really love your friend K——' and I shall go to him!"

"When he finally came to believe her, to accept her decision as it hardened under the hammer of his resistance, he was for a time like a madman, and then he went out into the winter night and left her alone with her thoughts. She

said she felt like one who has come through an earthquake and sits amid the wreckage of its fallen walls and familiar objects upside down, to get her bearings—but she was not sorry! She went over all the path they had traveled together during the years since their marriage, recalled his unselfish devotion, his gifts, his sending her abroad while he toiled through the hot summers, and still she was not sorry! There was plenty of time in the years to come in which to be sorry, and just then she was possessed by a blind, unreasoning fury of revolt against every tiresome detail of her life, and she had lingered overlong with the temptation of her last imbecile flirtation.

"Well, the end of it all was in keeping with her husband's character. He had thought out what to do while he walked the square through the long hours of the night, and in the morning he came and told her how it was to be. As he was a man of action as well as a man of iron—so it was. She had three days in which to pack everything she chose to take, and on the fourth he came back and started her on her journey to the Western State where he exacted her promise to remain till she had obtained the trumpety divorce that would enable her to marry her lover and preserve thus the poor rag of outer respectability. He put into her hands the funds necessary to maintain her during the period of waiting, and then left her with this for good-bye: 'God grant I may never see your face again!'"

The fire sent up a long trail of light and died down in scolding sputters. A tear slipped over Mrs. Trenor's cheek in the pause of a long silence, and then Mrs. Henrotin laughed again—a soft, gurgling laugh that shocked her listener as if it had been a shout of derision.

"I beg pardon, but the sequel was so—so utterly absurd! When the lover heard how Godfrey Trenor had behaved, a revulsion came over his passion and he refused to marry her! Again Trenor came to the rescue, and this time *vi et armis*. Almost at the pistol's point those two poor wretches were linked together to work out in

their squalid mating the punishment of their mutual treason!

"Now that you know the whole hideous drama, you will not fear such a ghost as that, no matter when or where it walks!"

Agnes Trenor's hands were locked tightly in their grasp of control, and her voice was hardly more than a tense whisper: "But what of her now—now? Has she still that 'lure' that draws the hearts of men? Ah, to think she still has the power so to move him in these latter days—the days that are mine!"

The silence that fell between them was palpitant with things that seemed on the eve of crying out their meaning. It was as if another "earthquake" were impending; as if a word, a breath, might start it and chaos come down again—a chaos like that the woman sitting there amid her cushions had so calmly described. The early darkness of the winter afternoon blackened the windows, and the fire smoldering on the hearth left the room in shadowy twilight. Mrs. Henrotin laid aside the guard of the little screen and rose up tall and graceful in her clinging robes, as she extended her hand in a suggested farewell.

"You need not fear her," she said, and her voice had regained all its honeyed sweetness, as the words fell with a delicate, slow precision; "that hell of which I spoke that always opens for women like her, that squalor of the spirit, has left its marks on her, body and soul. Beside your youth, your beauty, your innocence, she seems older than the Sphinx!"

As she drew aside the drapery of the doorway to let her guest pass, she twisted her white fingers in the soft silk folds and so held herself steady from the trembling that had seized upon her limbs. Standing so she said her last word:

"Precious things—like love, for instance—are apt to be fragile. In any case, a treasure is worth guarding. If I were you, I would take mine away again—half a world away is none too far!"

AS HE WROTE IT

By WOOD LEVETTE WILSON

BLITHENS declared, didactically, as he squirmed in the carriage to shake imaginary grains of rice out of his collar, that it had all been the result of a late Easter.

"It's clear enough," he observed sagely, skinning off his white gloves. "A late Easter means good weather; good weather permits the most attractive costumes, and attractive costumes are very alluring to the masculine eye—simple enough. He came, he saw and she conquered—*venit, vidit—um—er*—isn't it the deuce to transpose a regular stock quotation after a fellow has been out of college so long?" And Blithens leaned back in the carriage somewhat exhausted. "But the dope, that is, the theory is all right—sure!" he insisted. And speaking from the abundant knowledge and experience of twenty-four, Blithens felt no doubt that his opinions were entitled to something a little more than respect.

"Nice figuring," remarked Barkalow, who, having a touch or two of gray in his hair, was not entirely confident of his own opinions or even those of Blithens. "Sounds almost like logic."

"Logic!" exclaimed Blithens. "It's nothing else. Just the ability to put two and two together—"

"But that's mere addition."

"—and make," Blithens went on, ignoring the interruption, "the inevitable sum."

"Which, for the lack of an adding machine, is generally wrong."

"I may have—indeed, I've no doubt I do have—my weaknesses," Blithens continued in an aggressively

tolerant spirit, "but I'm logical, anyhow."

"You are," agreed Barkalow; "perniciously so. So much so, in fact, that I sometimes fear that it is your destiny to sink eventually to that abyss of political mechanism known as the 'logical candidate.'"

But, as a matter of fact, Blithens knew nothing about it. Instead of being the result of a late Easter, it had really been the outcome of a restless imagination; that is, of course, the direct outcome, setting aside all psychological considerations. And Barkalow had a guilty feeling, as he went back to those lonely rooms, that it had been largely his fault. After four years at college and seven years in adjoining apartments—during which, as Barkalow said, nothing had ever come between Atherholt and him but a bathroom—he ought, no doubt, to have known better.

And yet he had meant well on the day he had walked from his room through both of the carelessly left open doors of the bath, and found Atherholt with his feet on the window sill and his hat over his eyes, burning tobacco in his pipe at a rate which was really discourteous to the quality of the brand.

"S matter?" he asked, rather indifferently.

"Nothing," growled Atherholt in the tone that meant everything.

Barkalow drew up a chair sociably, and settled into it with the wisdom of *a priori* knowledge.

"Don't be an ass, Billy," he said fraternally.

Atherholt grunted.

"Rome wasn't built in a day, you

know," he went on—even between intimate friends it is sometimes a little difficult to put things in bald words.

Atherholt's grunt this time was a snort of impatience.

"You're all right, Billy."

Atherholt slid farther down in his chair by way of reply.

"But," Barkalow went on philosophically, "you're impatient; you're fidgety; you're too—too eloquently imaginative."

Atherholt's dark looks resented the accusation.

"Now," persisted Barkalow, "you've just been sitting here worrying yourself with imaginary conversations—what Tom said, and what Dick said, and what Harry said; worse than that, what *you* said, and worst of all, what *she* said."

Still Atherholt didn't answer in words; but he looked guilty.

"I knew it!" declared Barkalow. "Since you've been at it you've been as if you've framed up enough mind dialogue to fill a couple of columns of valuable newspaper space, which, fortunately, is used more profitably for advertisements. But I tell you, old man, there's nothing to it. Not once in a blue moon has anyone ever pulled off one of those imaginary dialogues according to the dope. There's the—*the*—the what-do-you-call-it, you know. You don't take into consideration the—*the*—the personal equation. And the party of the second part never says the right thing."

"Bosh!" scoffed Atherholt, but his tone was not convincing.

"With your malignant case in mind," went on Barkalow, assuming under the stress of the occasion a confidence and impressiveness he did not feel, "I've doped out a curative method of treatment."

Atherton began to look a little weaky.

"When you feel one of these spells of mental volubility coming on," Barkalow persisted, "don't sit down and submit your intellect to a flux of words, but get to your desk and your fountain pen—write 'em! It's harder work,

and will take longer, but the results are better. You'll find that Tom, Dick and Harry, and you, and even *she*, don't say nearly so much, and say it a good deal more sensibly. Besides, this scheme gets the thing off your mind and out of your system, and enables you to go to sleep normally."

Atherholt grunted again, but more tolerantly, as if he saw possibilities in the theory. Not that he had any idea of following the advice, for his case, of course, was different; but as an abstract proposition, he was almost willing to admit that there might be something in it.

"Good night," said Barkalow; "I'm going to bed."

Atherholt sat still for ten minutes after Barkalow had closed the door on his side of the bathroom. Then he got up and went hesitatingly to his desk. He even picked up his pen.

"Bosh!" he snorted once more, as he threw down the pen.

Which shows that second thoughts may not always be the best if there are too many of them.

It was not Atherholt's intention to go to the Carrington dance—what was the use? And he would not have gone if he had not, after waiting on the corner twenty minutes for her to come out of a department store, accidentally met her in the street. Then, as it seemed so evident that she expected him to be present, there wasn't anything else for him to do but go. Not that his better judgment approved—far from it; he didn't even expect to have a good time. But what has better judgment to do with such a case?

Thus he was not surprised to find that only the seventh dance could be his. As he sulked in the smoking room waiting for it, he almost wished he hadn't come—almost, not quite. But time will eventually pass if one waits long enough for it, and finally he went out and took her away from Tom Kneeland—who devoted practically all of his time to spending an income that was disgustingly large.

In the middle of the music he stopped. "Wouldn't you like to rest?" he asked.

"Am I dancing so badly?" Her demureness would have been suspicious to anyone less absorbed, but Atherholt merely despised himself for once more, as usual, doing and saying the wrong thing.

"Of course not!" he protested. "But—I am. Besides, it's nice to talk—that is, I like it, if you don't mind."

"We-l-l," she dwelt on the word tantalizingly. "Where shall we go?"

"Wherever you say."

For an instant her raised eyes met his—and that was worth the sacrifices of the evening—then they dropped again under those long lashes, which he could see almost as well when she wasn't with him as when she was, so well he knew them.

"There's the conservatory, you know." The suggestion was timidly offered.

And there was nobody in it—which cheered Atherholt with the thought that even the unlucky sometimes have slim streaks of good fortune. The light was dim about the bench in the corner behind the big palms, but a splendid moon shone through the glass. Dances were not such bad things, after all—if one didn't fritter away his time dancing.

"Isn't it just a splendid dance?" she exclaimed enthusiastically.

"Is it?" He couldn't avoid a touch of sarcasm.

She glanced at him quickly—and perhaps understandingly.

"I don't believe you're having a good time," she said.

"I haven't been." There was half a growl in his voice—and still she wasn't offended; on the contrary, she seemed rather pleased.

"Why did you come?" Again she was demure.

"You know well enough."

"No."

"I came because you wanted—that is, because you said you would be here."

"Oh."

"And mighty little good it has done me," he added after a pause.

"Oh," she said again. Then as he

made no reply she added, "What makes you so cross?"

The music for the next dance was beginning. She didn't seem to hear it, but he knew that in a moment someone would be coming to carry her off.

"I'm not cross," he declared, with a touch of impatience.

"Oh," she said once more, looking at him a moment and then dropping her curtain lashes.

"There's no use," he exclaimed. "You know well enough how it is, or you ought to. I know there's no chance for a fellow like me, no matter if he would give his right arm just to make you—" He paused. Footsteps were approaching. Tom Kneeland rounded the big palms and stood before them. The dance before had been his, and now the one after—Atherholt gritted his teeth.

"Oh, here you are!" exclaimed Kneeland cheerfully, while he glanced suspiciously at Atherholt. "Been looking for you everywhere; this one's mine, you know."

She rose and took Kneeland's arm.

"Good night," said Atherholt, as they moved away.

Her raised eyebrows betokened surprise as she looked back at him.

"Oh, are you going?" she said. "Good night."

"Fool!" growled Atherholt mentally, as he watched them go. And yet the smile she gave him over her shoulder just as she passed out of sight afforded momentary balm. Perhaps—

The door on Barkalow's side of the bathroom was closed when Atherholt got in, and low rumblings from beyond it told that nature's sweet restorer was doing some of its most thorough work.

But Atherholt couldn't sleep. He knew that, so he didn't even try. The possibilities—and also the impossibilities—of the situation bore heavily upon him. For a while he smoked vigorously, with scant enjoyment of the tobacco. His thoughts seethed—what he would say and what they would say—their leading question, his cool and noncommittal reply; their further insistence, and his crushing rejoinder.

The thing was so simple and inevitable, and yet—

Suddenly he straightened himself in his chair, tossed his cigar stub into the ash tray, and, getting up, peeled off his coat. Then, going to his desk, with his chin stuck aggressively out, he sat down and, picking up his pen, squared himself to write. Barkalow's idea might not be such a bad one, after all. For instance, there was Kneeland. He could imagine Kneeland's attitude very well, thus—and his pen traveled rapidly:

KNEELAND—Fine conservatory at the Carringtons' (*tentatively*).

ATHERHOLT—Never saw a finer (*non-committally*).

KNEELAND—And made all the more attractive by the presence of a pretty girl (*still tentatively*).

ATHERHOLT—Undoubtedly (*conclusively*).

Really, there did not seem so much to be said when one went to all the trouble of writing it out. He rubbed the end of his penholder through his hair ruminatingly. Um-m-m, well, yes, there was Barkalow. Again the fountain fed the nib:

BARKALOW—You take it too seriously, Billy.

ATHERHOLT—Take what? (*Indifferently*).

BARKALOW (*with some embarrassment at not being understood*)—Why—er—about that girl.

ATHERHOLT (*with dignity*)—I don't take "it" or anything else, either seriously or otherwise. I don't take "it" at all. I don't take anything. I know my place in the world (*bitterly*) and the less I take, the less I'll have to regret.

BARKALOW—Oh, nonsense, Billy! You could go in and win in a walk if you only had the self-confidence that you ought to have.

Now, it was very nice and encouraging for Barkalow to say that, and Atherholt felt immensely encouraged. He did lack self-confidence, and there might be a good deal in the suggestion. Perhaps if he were to go boldly to her and say—again he wrote vigorously:

ATHERHOLT—I've known you nearly a year now.

SHE—Yes, almost—I mean, is that so?

ATHERHOLT—Don't you remember the day we met?

SHE—Let's see—

ATHERHOLT—It was last Easter.

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SHE—Oh, yes; that's so. And I was wearing my—

ATHERHOLT—I don't know, I'm sure. I only saw you, not your clothes.

SHE (*after a pause*)—I haven't seen you at church since.

ATHERHOLT—No.

SHE—Why not?

ATHERHOLT—I never know when you are going to be there; and, besides, you always go home in the carriage.

SHE—How do you know?

ATHERHOLT—I've watched you.

SHE—Oh!

ATHERHOLT—Oh, yes; I've watched you there, and I've watched you other places when you didn't know it. I'm always waiting, hoping for a chance; but I'm always afraid.

SHE—Afraid? Faint heart.

ATHERHOLT—No, I know it never wins; but the brave ones don't always, either. There is such a thing as being brave enough to be foolish. I've nearly been that several times, but I've always remembered.

SHE—Remembered what?

ATHERHOLT—That I'm just a poor devil with nothing to offer a girl except a mere life of devotion; that I've got to make all my own way, to do everything for myself. It would be asking too much of her. It wouldn't be fair. She might not understand how strong a man is when love—(*Pause*.)

SHE (*slowly*)—But she might understand.

ATHERHOLT (*eagerly*)—She might?

SHE (*with downcast eyes*)—I didn't say—

ATHERHOLT—But you do understand. You know that I love you, that I want to give my life to your service. Don't you, oh, don't you think you could get to love me just—

He took a long breath, relaxed, and threw down his pen.

"What nonsense!" he muttered.

And yet he felt better for it. The word was spoken—on paper, anyway—and, in a large measure, the stress of the thing was off his mind. There being nothing more to be said for the present he went to bed and slept peacefully—thus unwittingly demonstrating that there really was a good deal of truth in Barkalow's philosophy.

So sound was Atherholt's sleep, indeed, that the rush of water which preceded Barkalow's tub the next morning was naught to him. Nor, indeed, was he conscious of the fact that Barkalow, clad in a bizarre bathrobe, strode in, shuffling across his sitting room, and looked in upon him.

"The sleep of the weary," muttered Barkalow. "He needs it."

As he started back to his own apartment his eye caught the litter of paper on the desk. He glanced over the top-most sheets, and chuckled—chuckled with the I-told-you-so satisfaction of a man whose excellent advice has been beneficially followed. Then Barkalow did an inexcusable thing. With a further chuckle, he gathered up the last few sheets that Atherholt had written, and carried them off with him.

When Atherholt arose he was refreshed and cheerful; so much so, in fact, that many incidents of the night before seemed foolish. One of the first things he did was to sweep the litter of sheets from his desk, without reading them, into a drawer and turn the key. Not that he had given up—far from it; but the writing had served its purpose, and he was more encouraged to face the realities of the situation. Let time bring what it might. He would win if he could, and if he couldn't—He went to breakfast with a hearty appetite.

With the patience of Job he waited two whole days, and then he called. She had a folded paper, something like a letter, in her hand when she entered the room. Afterwards, he remembered that there was something in her eyes he had never seen before. Even through the commonplaces of greeting and preliminary exchange of comment it lasted. Eventually those commonplaces were exhausted, and there was a pause. She turned her eyes full upon him, daringly, challengingly, as one who has felt deeply, while she unfolded the paper in her hand.

"Did you write that?" she asked.

One glance at the paper left Atherholt's face crimson. But—well, he wouldn't lie—not to her, at any rate.

"Yes," he said in a low tone through his tightly closed teeth.

She folded the paper carelessly in her hand, and, with her head thrown back, smiled at him with almost closed eyes.

"And who is 'she,' I wonder?" she said.

Atherholt caught his breath with his chest filled to its ultimate lung capacity. A stimulating, a triumphant and yet apprehensive thrill passed through him; an illuminating mental flash told him that it was now or never.

"She," he said slowly, steadying his voice with some effort, "is—you."

She sank back in her chair without speaking, and the color came and went in her cheeks at the realization of the result of her reckless, her even impertinent venture.

He was standing over her looking down at her as he had never dared let himself look at her before.

"I mean it," he said, tensely, "every word of it, though I don't know that I should ever have had the nerve to tell you so if it hadn't been for this. I do love you better than I can write it out, or even tell you if I talked forever. I couldn't tell anybody about it, and I had to do something, so I just wrote it out. It's part of Barkalow's philosophy to write things out when you are full of them, so I— But if you're angry—" He paused.

"I'm not angry," she said softly.

"Then you forgive me for being so foolish as to write—"

"I'm glad you wrote it."

How much time passed during the ecstasy of holding her in his arms he did not know. All crises pass, however, and finally he spoke.

"But where in the world did you get that paper?" he asked.

"It came to me with a note from Mr. Barkalow, which merely said that it was something he had picked up which might interest me."

He held her close to him and looked down into her eyes.

"Barkalow," he said ecstatically, "is a treacherous old scoundrel—and I'll never be able to thank him enough for being one."



UPON HAVING IMAGINATION

By CHARLES FRANCIS READ

AS we draw farther and farther away from the slip of our embarkation in the voyage of this life, we are all of us more or less disposed to the employment of various arts and devices for the preservation of the appearance of youth. We bridge and fill and sophisticate our teeth in divers ways, and of a morning we brush our hair in panic-stricken haste over the bald spot that increases in circumference with each pained scrutiny. We massage the creases and folds of our countenances and even seek to fill them in with paraffin—thus endeavoring to maintain appearances with the very same material we use to protect our jellies and jams from the inroads of time. We thrust out our chests and draw in our girths with many a quaint device, and, even though we be grandfathers and grandmothers, we must needs wear the same cut of coat and gown as our grandsons and granddaughters, the same style of hat and stock. All these things, and more, we do for the sake of our looks, meanwhile praying our friends of two or three generations to kindly take us for what we seem to be, and notice not the muffled sighs and groans and imprecations that proceed from behind this mask of smiling youth we assume with no small effort of the imagination.

All this we do—and ride our fancy right hard to keep the pace—and, at the same time, almost without exception, we pride ourselves more and more upon our *matter-of-factness*, upon the common sense, shrewd way in which we have come to look upon all things with the onward march of the years.

To be sure, there are some of us who

still possess imagination enough to carry our dolls to bed with us at night now and then, or on a rainy afternoon to play soldier with wooden sword and paper helmet, but we are in a sad minority, I fear. For the most part, this gift of the gods to the earth-born burns in us with a spluttering, intermittent flame, the brightest light of which serves only to make more visible the thick, sable draperies of "hard sense" hanging closely all about us.

I took my friend Stanley out into my garden the other day. It was a crisp, blue morning, driving straight in upon us fresh off the frost-rimmed northern boundary of May. I led him out beneath my cherry tree deep banked with white, and holding a cupped hand close above my squinting eyes, I asked him if he could not just make out the glistening mass of an iceberg far out upon the dancing waters of the offing. As I spoke I drew in great lungfuls of the salt air. It was glorious!

I count Stanley as one of my very good friends, but he has become so only comparatively recently, and he is not thoroughly broken as yet. He is a big, lofty sort of a fellow, not at all easily excited; but he started perceptibly as I spoke, and while I gazed I felt his silent stare resting heavily upon my shoulders. Then from up among the cherry blossoms a gently bellowed "*Huh!*" came booming down upon my head. "You'd better be getting your potatoes in before long," he added with dry gusto. "It's time for early Ohios."

Now there is a largish garden patch back of my house in our little inland

town a thousand miles from the sea, and I am not ashamed to say that in the summer time I depend upon it considerably for exercise—and not a little for the regularity of my meals, I might add, since it must be acknowledged that the imagination, train it as you will, is rarely a steady income producer. At the very best, it pours out its treasures at unequal intervals. *But*, I contend, Stanley had no business to remind me of all that just then. When I attempted to develop the mustard seed of invention which he possesses, it was his play to lend me all the aid he could, and *not* to tear up the struggling germ by the roots with the conscious air of one who exterminates a noxious weed.

Stanley is claim agent for the C. B. & N., and a hopeless case from my point of view, I am told by those who know us both. He prides himself upon his hard head, upon his intimate acquaintance with the stern realities of life. "Stern realities"—*Pouf!* That for them! Before I am done with him he shall see *ghosts*, never fear. If the man of imagination but possess a very moderate ability to project the play of his fancy, magic-lanternlike, upon the white canvas of his neighbor's sheets hung out to dry upon the line on a wash day, he is bound sooner or later to command his neighbor's breathless interest in the phenomenon—even if it does occur upon blue Monday morning.

There are some of us who aspire to make a staid draft horse of our imagination; but, try as we will, we must often content ourselves with following helplessly at its flying heels as it drags our chariot in irrational flight far afield from the chosen road. For instance: I am asked by a thoughtful friend of mine who has already made more out of butterine than he has imagination to spend, to write a sonnet in praise of his new "Dairy Dew" brand. Straightway—because I am in need of a new suit—I harness my Pegasus after the immemorial custom, and together we labor with bending backs and sweating flanks and slipping feet until the hateful task is half done,

when all at once my nag flings up his head, snaps his traces with a single effort, and barely gives me time to leap to his back before he spreads his wings with a great swish and speeds away up into the blue.

Snatches of a mighty ode flash through my brain as we soar. There is in it the cry of all humanity in birth, sorrow, pain and death; it has the mighty roar of the ocean in its measures, the thunder of shouting millions as they move on to victory and defeat. I look into the homes of my fellow men as they read my lines with choking sobs and shining faces. I am crowned with laurel and the recipient of adulation—and moneys.

And then slowly, regretfully, I guide my protesting mount back to earth again and we finish the task. A little later I read my halting verses in the back of a magazine, unsigned—but I have my cheque, and I have had a ride that all my butterine man's money could not purchase for him.

But then, you contend, since I am a poet, my entire argument for the imagination is necessarily vitiated at the very beginning. Poets are notoriously foolish people, given over to impracticality, irregular love affairs and poverty. Well, have it so for the moment, if this is your manner of thinking—but I skip lightly out from beneath the crushing weight of your retort. I am *not* a poet at all. You have not read my "Dairy Dew" verses, or you would not pay me the unmerited tribute. I *am* a poet in my dreams sometimes, and thankfully so, but at my desk I am only an humble worker in the mines of prose—not at all an eagle in the empyrean.

Even though there are some of us who strive to make capital of the imagination in one way or another, this sort of thing is obviously for comparatively few—just as are professional boxing, and painting and the raising of chickens. And still we all have our little fads, our avocations, do we not? It is then more especially for the assuagement of the pain of the commonplace, for the surcease of care, for the

cure of weariness that I beg a more careful consideration of this divine medicament.

In the shop where I buy my meat there is a young butcher who reads Scott. I have wormed it out of him by devious ways that he would greatly have enjoyed the job of wielding a battle-ax. The other day, when we were alone in the shop, after some warm discussion he illustrated for me upon a side of mutton just what force would be required to cut off a man's head, leaving out the question of armor.

"Ouf!" we grunted in unison as the ax slithered through muscle, ligament and bone, to bury its edge in the block with a sickening, satisfactory thud.

"Think *that* 'ud 'a' fixed him?" Sanders exclaimed with quiet elation as he turned about with bare arms akimbo, one hand resting lightly upon the upturned ax-helve.

"*Would* it!" I cried, carried clean out of myself with admiration. "Why he never knew what struck him!"

Halfway home I startled a demure old lady I chanced to be passing, with a solitary peal of laughter. It had just occurred to me how absurd little Sanders looked as he posed by his battle-ax *pro tempore*, with his colorless eyebrows fiercely knit above his mild blue eyes and his boyish mouth so firmly set above his runaway chin. Yes, it was very funny when I stopped to think—and yet Sanders and I had had our thrill together, and I really respect him much more now since I have discovered that at times he wields a battle-ax in place of a meat chopper. I fancy, too, that he cuts meat more skillfully, and faster, for a knowledge of his rightful heritage.

The trouble with many of us lies in this: that we laugh long before fancy has a fair chance to complete the entertainment she prepares upon the spur of the moment to help us to forget, or to cheer us on our way. We even laugh before the curtain rises, or, Samson-like, we grasp the main pillars of the theater's support and pull the whole business down upon our heads

with shouts of brutish glee. We bury ourselves in the ruins, to be sure, but we wot little of this, since the fabric is of so tenuous a nature that we feel no hurt at the time. We have vindicated the fat, pig-faced deity of "hard sense," and are free thereafter to sweat and shiver unremittingly in sun and storm, without wasting further time in rendering homage at the shrine of the fair-spoken, illusion-breeding goddess of invention.

Although the psychologists have divided the faculty of the imagination into two parts, there is nowhere a clean-cut border line between the fancy, working its own sweet will unrestrained, and the constructive imagination moving steadily towards a more or less definite goal under the guidance of will and judgment. The day dreams of the inattentive schoolboy and the lovelorn damsel pass, by imperceptible gradations, into the marble miracles of the Parthenon and the mighty conception of a Nebular Hypothesis. The beginning lies always in the wooden sword and paper helmet—the end, *maybe*, in the conquests of an Alexander or a Napoleon.

Day dreams, castles in Spain, figments of the imagination—ah, how we laugh at them all nowadays! They are good enough for the little ones, for the boys and girls, perhaps, but as for *us*—we have long ago outgrown them. With what gusto we speak of So-and-So as a hard-headed chap, a money getter, while we dismiss his rival with a lift of the brows as "an impractical fellow."

Shame upon us for it, too! God give us more dreamers, I pray; more of those whose inner eye is free of cataract. We need them here in America today; we are too practical a people. We are young in years, but we have fought an aging battle for the supremacy of a great continent. We have come up out of the struggle with the rich trophies of victory fast clutched in our calloused hands. We have worked desperately hard for them, and they are good to look upon—but we must have a care now lest we bow down before them in abject fetish worship.

Three hundred years ago Cervantes took a poor, insane old gentleman of Spain, and with the absurd recital of his exploits upon the borderland of imagination and reality laughed chivalry out of court in Europe. We are told that he served his times well in this, but you will agree with me that today there is a very tender spot in the hearts of many of us for the man who rode atilt at windmills. The fact is, not a few of us are growing weary of Things. The material world threatens to become a bore if we make no occasional escape from it. Open work plumbing and electric lighting and hot water heating—all these things are comforts and blessings; but a man *can* get along without them, can even grow so weary of them that he will flee to the wilderness to be rid of them.

Upon the other hand, with a fair command of the imagination, a man, no matter where he may be, need never suffer *ennui*. He has always at his command infinite combinations of all those countless impressions into which recollection resolves itself with the progress of the years. Though he lie in a prison cell, he may project upon the opposite wall the cinematographic presentation of "Pilgrim's Progress"; though he sit in the stony silence of utter deafness, he may interweave the majestic harmonies of a mighty "Ninth Symphony," and though he be fettered to a narrow islet of the sea by the chains of consumption, he may still bear to the world "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."

Three books among the many I have loved to read. They hold a peculiar place in my heart, these three: "Alice in Wonderland," "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" and "Peter Ibbetson." Now have your laugh at me if you will for the foolish trifter that I am. I am steeled to your contempt, for hundreds of editions uphold me in the belief that I am not alone in this bestowal of my affection. What one of us, at one time or another, has not longed to step through a suddenly discovered, mysterious doorway in a familiar room, and to thread his way

along a winding, hidden passage to a dinner with the Mad Hatter and the March Hare? What one of us is so empty of thrills as never to have responded to the call of sunken treasure, forgotten wrecks and dead men's bones at the bottom of the sea? The Arabian tunnel, the lost Atlantis, the maelstrom—ah, here is simon pure imagination for you! Why, only the other day I bought the sequel to Verne's masterpiece to give to a young friend of mine condemned to his bed for long months, and before I could get it to him I had read it all over again, clean through to the last lines that assure us of the final safe harboring of the faithful friends in a snug valley beside a great mountain—in Iowa! And yet again, what one of us has not said to his family at the breakfast table: "I had such a queer dream last night. I wish I could recall it now. It was the strangest thing you ever heard of." And there we stick—until Du Maurier steps briskly up to fill in the hopeless gap with his wonderful tale of "dreaming true," so delightfully impossible and withal so satisfactorily real. Have you never tried it, this dreaming true? Do so, then. You may chance to succeed where I have failed, and, anyway, it is a beautiful way of falling asleep.

I wonder how many mothers nowadays tell fairy stories to their boys and girls? I have never forgotten the one—the only one—my mother told me a good many years ago. It was all about a wonderful rose that by the magic of its perfume transformed the hut of a poor, sick boy into the palace of a king. It was a fine story and all my own, because my mother made it up for me as she went along. I have often asked her why she did not tell me others like it. I am sure she might have if she had only tried, but this she never did, because she had allowed her imagination to grow rusty and it seemed too difficult a task to refurbish it.

And bear stories—how many fathers tell them now? It is true, however, that Bruin is a back number today; along with the crafty redskin he is following the buffalo to the happy

hunting grounds. But what about the airship and the submarine—are they not all ready for us to take a ride with Elizabeth and John almost any evening before bedtime?

Rather silly, though? Yes—possibly. But what about the light opera over which we laughed until we cried for two or three hours the other evening—and the next morning wondered what there was so funny about it? Why did we enjoy it—the secret? Why, it is only this: that at times it is good to be silly. It helps us to forget, keeps us near to our sons and daughters, near to our childhood, near to those glorious days of ancient Greece, when men in childish abandon created marvelous things from out of their imaginations—beautiful gods and goddesses, stately temples, strong philosophies and heroic poems.

And here we are, without a break, full upon that wonderful affair, the *creative* imagination. God give us grace to recognize it for what it is when we behold it—the very crown of living and thinking. Upon a steep mountain-side, laboring painfully from rock to rock, hanging now by one hand, balancing again upon one foot, two tanned and roughly bearded men, alternately baked by the sun and stiffened by the cold, crawl upward where no man has been foolish enough to go before them. Now and then they turn about and survey the gorge below them long and curiously. Very practical men are these “locating engineers,” but men of imagination as well, for through their field glasses they are able to perceive what no other men have seen as yet—a great steel bridge leaping across that monstrous rift in a single span, and bearing upon its slender back a train loaded with men and women and children who glance idly down into the depths as they rush across at forty miles an hour.

And in spirit, even before the locating engineer, goes another man, possibly a very prosaic looking, bald-headed, stoutish old gentleman, but nevertheless a man with a clear inner vision, a man with the eye of faith to

see a teeming population in a barren land wholly given over to jack rabbits, prairie dogs and wandering herds of sheep and cattle. Another man of imagination is this empire builder, an industrial prophet and seer not wholly given over to thoughts of stocks and bonds—one who sends out spies into the promised land to bring back huge bunches of grapes from vineyards not yet planted by these ten or twenty years.

All of which, however, may seem far afield from plain you and me; farther from you, even, you may say, than from me, since I have already confessed to a certain dependence upon the fruits of imagination for sustenance when my garden is under the snows. You are a bookkeeper, perchance, or a housekeeper, or a lighthouse keeper, or a storekeeper, and the charge is a most practical one, a painfully everyday sort of business that leaves no room whatever for the imagination.

I am very sorry that you feel this way about it.

Are you perfectly sure that a glimpse of green Capri rising steep from sparkling waters and all studded with white villas hanging between sea and sky would not refresh you on an early morning in May or December—even if the vision is soon blurred? When your wife or your daughter plays for you some queer Grieg air, don't you think it would uplift you to draw aside the curtain of the window of your soul and look out for a moment upon a vast multitude of white mountain peaks thrusting their frozen pinnacles into a brilliant blue sky, with only the far roar of an occasional avalanche to break the awful silence? Would it not even do you good now and then to toy for a time with the perilous delights of the old question of “what would you do with a million?”—in place of always resolutely setting it aside as mere foolishness?

At the best, we have so little and must work so hard; why should we not build for ourselves from day to day an ever growing tabernacle of the imagination, into which we may slip from.

time to time, leaving behind us at the wide welcoming portals the burden of our necessity—there to steep ourselves in the cool, dull glow of the sun shining through stained-glass windows, there to steep ourselves in the odor of incense and the sound of chanting?

It would be no place for loafing, this temple, or for spending time that is needed for the work of the day; but rather a house of refuge, where for a few moments the soul might rest itself when hard pressed, or refresh itself when the day's labor is over. Here would be a place to tarry a while and take courage and counsel of hope and faith; here a place to take the children and wander about with them hand in hand, while explaining to them the mysteries of its dark cellars where fearsome monsters grovel and bellow, and the structure of its far-flung arches where pigeons fly about and angels sing hosannas. Tell me—could you not love a spot like this?

To wring the last sweet shudder from out the memory of a terrifying dream as we waken to the security of a snug, warm bed; to smell the salt spray in a spring breeze a thousand miles from the sea; to hug to our breast the warm comfort of a supper time in a hundred homes as we watch the purple shadows deepen in the afterglow of a November sunset—in such things as these lie

blessing and joy and a cure of all pettiness.

I have in one of the drawers of my desk a vial of attar of roses. There is only a drop of the stuff, and yet I have taken a hundred trips to the Orient upon that little vial—like a witch aboard her broomstick. I have only to take it between a thumb and finger and bring it beneath my nose, and straightway I am transported to that great bridge of all nations that links Stamboul with Galata across the Golden Horn. I have never been there in the flesh, and I have an idea that it does not smell at all of attar of roses; but this seems to make no difference whatever. There I am, and there I may stay, wandering along as I please until I am content to lay my magic away.

Tell me now, what need have I of a magic carpet? What horizon can compass me about, though circumstance hold me as tight fast in its cruel clutch as ever the Iron Maid held her lovers?

Then I pray the dear Lord, for myself and for all of us: Give us our dreams in youth and middle age, and permit us not to turn away from them as we grow old. Help us to use our imaginations, if not to the great profit of humanity, at least to the freeing of ourselves from time to time from the shackles of necessity.



A P R I L

By ROSALIE ARTHUR

WHEN the fresh scent of quickened earth is rising,
 And maple buds flower out in vivid red,
 When at my feet anemones are scattered
 Like silvery fallen stars from overhead—

All the old marvels in the pale spring sunlight—
 All the old love-sweet notes from field and tree—
 How shall I live and bear this tender beauty
 While April memories break the heart of me?

DOLORES

By MRS. HAVELOCK ELLIS

BEN ARMSTRONG looked at his wife and whistled. They had been married four years, and yet as he looked at her he often whistled, as was his way when puzzled. Tonight she had got so much on his nerves that he frowned as he looked down upon her. He stood in the window of their little hotel sitting room, with his back to the closed shutters and his hands in his pockets. He half closed his eyes, and meditated as he watched the woman who puzzled him. She was a very plain woman, and at times Ben was irritably conscious of it. She was leaning back in a long rocking-chair, and her hands, supple and strangely individual, were folded before her as she half dozed. They had just dined, and their coffee and liqueur were on the table before them. He suddenly stopped whistling.

"Jul! What's up?"

She looked at him from head to foot in a tired way, and then slowly lifted up her glass and held it to the light before she drank.

"I'm bored," she said quietly and slowly.

He laughed.

She looked down and played with her rings, slipping them from finger to finger in a listless way. Ben sighed and clasped his hands behind his dark, curly hair.

"Funny girl!" he muttered. "Boredom, at any rate, is no disease!"

"It's worse!" she said.

He looked at her a little nervously and made a mouth for whistling, but stopped and said abruptly:

"After that illness of yours, of course you felt weak for a long time, and anybody could see you were dull. That is why I thought Spain would brighten

you up, now that you are really well enough to enjoy it. I meant you to have a good time, and you seem as much out of it here as anywhere else."

He began to whistle softly again, and she kept time with her foot to the Spanish dance tune which drummed in her brain. Ben looked at her intently for a moment. Then he turned on his heel and twisted round to her chair and stood facing her.

"Tell me," he said firmly; "what's up, really?"

She laughed stupidly and put her hands behind her head.

"I've got a devil, a very tired old devil, in me, I think," she said.

He smiled.

"Indigestion?" he queried.

"Possibly," she answered.

"It's the Spanish cooking, I expect. It is calculated to make anybody see dreams and entertain demons un-awares!"

He finished his glass and lighted another cigarette.

"What are you going to do tonight?" she asked.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, get copy somewhere, I suppose. A journalist can never have a real holiday. A fellow must live, and I'm getting hard up enough, goodness knows!"

Ju rose and put her hand on his arm.

"Ben," she said slowly, "do you care a bit for me?"

"My good girl, what do you mean? Aren't you my wife?"

She smiled a little bitterly. "Am I your sweetheart?" she asked; "that's what I meant."

He knelt down by her and put his powerful hands on her knees as he looked into her eyes. He rocked her

backward and forward very gently for a few seconds, and then pulled down her hands and put them one upon another and folded them in his.

"Funny child!" he muttered; "she's got the dumps and no mistake. Have another glass." And he laughed happily into her face.

"Drink your coffee," she said, as she shook her head in answer.

He obeyed, and then played with her fingers and the ring he had given her.

"I would do anything I could to make you happy, Ju!" he said in a cheerful voice.

"I know," she muttered, but she did not look at him.

"I'm a dull fellow, but you are very dear to me." He spoke earnestly, and her eyes grew soft as she listened. She gently stroked his hair and let her hand rest on his thick neck. Her face had softened, and she suddenly appeared younger than he had seen her for many months. She often got inexplicable moods like the one which held her this evening, and he was nearly always too busy to cope with them or even analyze them. Besides, he put them down to women's whims and fancies and general vagaries, and he often thanked God he was not a woman whenever he thought about the matter at all.

"Ben!" she said suddenly.

For answer he pressed her hand and jerked his head in an interrogative way.

"I should like to go with you and Strange tonight. Don't say no," she went on eagerly, for the first time showing any real interest. "I don't care where it is or what it is, but let me go, Ben."

Her hands tightened on the arms of the rocking chair, and she swayed quickly backward and forward, her long gown hiding the movements of the little, impatient feet. "Take me," she went on rapidly; "take me, dear Ben, for I'm bored, bored to distraction with the people here and their grotesque attempts at music and dancing and talking. I feel sometimes it would be a relief to scream."

Ben was amused; he liked her when she got vigorous. He looked at his watch and meditated a few seconds.

"Well?" she asked eagerly.

"Impossible, Ju!"

She stamped her right foot and closed her large mouth with impatience.

"Why?" she demanded.

He shrugged his shoulders as he stood and looked down upon her.

"Strange and I are going—well—we're going to a place no lady would care to enter, but I'm obliged to get copy somewhere, and"—he laughed—"I believe one can get more than one bargains for there."

He looked at his watch again and then at his wife.

"Well, look here, Ju! I'll put it off until tomorrow," he said good-naturedly, "and we'll go to the café in the big square; it may amuse you, and you'll soon have had enough—and we'll call for Strange and explain."

"Take me, please," she said, "to the place you and Strange were going to; it would amuse me more."

Ben made a grimace.

"And shock you less," he mimicked.

"Probably," she said.

He grew a little impatient.

"No man could possibly take his wife there," he said decisively.

"Why?" she asked.

He sneered. "Because it is the lowest dancing place in the town; that is why," he answered.

"Ben," she said, looking into his eyes, "why mayn't I go where you can go?"

She often asked him questions like that, and his first impulse was to answer her in a direct way without fencing or pretense, but then he invariably remembered just in time how women ought to be treated, and he grew careful, for he knew how easily a man can make a whip for his own back. He looked at her and felt a little wave of tenderness creeping over him as he realized how entirely she was his and how he molded her every thought.

"Darling," he answered gently, "you cannot go where I go, simply because you are a woman and my wife,

and your brother would have the right to horsewhip me if I took you where Strange and I are going tonight."

"Are there no woman there, then?" she asked meaningly, looking at him out of the corners of her eyes.

He frowned.

"Of course; you know there are, but"—he waved his hand and then suddenly came quite close to her and lifted her face up to his and kissed her quickly and sweetly on the mouth. He put his arms around her and drew her to him as he whispered: "But not your kind, little wifey; be sure of that!"

She pushed him gently away with both hands and stood by his side, putting one hand through his arm and clasping her other with it as she said very seriously:

"Ben, for once treat me as a friend and not only as your wife. I'm that every day of my life, but I've never been your real chum once. Take me where you are going. I won't dance or shout or"—she smiled—"never be good no more, as the babies say. It may amuse me, and it can't harm me with you there. Be a real jolly chum, Ben, for once, and let me out of my ca—" She stopped. "Out of my boredom and humdrum, and let me do for one night what you and Strange do—live."

She put his hands against her cheeks and lifted her head.

"You don't know how I want to go," she said in a gentle voice.

"Ju, you're a little witch!" He stroked her hair. "A veritable Eve in the bargain!"

"Be Adam," she said in a low voice, as she laid her head against his arm, "and let us bite the apple together!"

He laughed heartily.

"Beastly boring thing to be always kept cooped up as the best of women are," he pondered. "They never know anything of the really funny side of life, and, after all, it is rather hard on them."

He pulled his mustache with one hand while he held Ju close with the other. "After all," he thought, "she's

out of England, and there are times when a day off clears the brain and braces the nerves like a tonic." He kissed the little brown head nestling so close to him, and put his hand gently on the white thin neck, which the chiffon of her tea gown only partially hid. He had not felt so near to her for years; not since he had first married her, and poor Ben suddenly realized that he was often very bored, too, when he only thought he was tired. He liked new sensations, and it certainly would be a new sensation to take his wife to a world of which she had no clue, a world reserved for the very strong and the very weak. As writer, critic, artist, even as lover, why not have a night of it? And Ju could really add to the zest if she did not spoil things by some woman's twaddle about morality or something of that kind. He held her more closely as he thought it out, and each pressure of the clinging arms and each tightening of the white fingers made his attitude less strenuous. He knew women so well, he mused, and he sighed as he recalled incidents in his past which confirmed his insight into their natures. The best of them were always scared at any glimpse of real life which lay outside their traditions; they would and they would not, and the result of his experiment might make life a hell for him at least a week if he were not tactful. He looked down at Ju again and a sudden strange tenderness swept over him.

"Come!" he said in a low voice; "come to me, little Ju!" and he sat in her chair and pulled her on his knees. "There," he went on, as he gathered her in his arms, "put your little head so and tell me if you really want to go to this low hole tonight?"

She nestled up to him with a great hope in her heart that he was going to relent, and she felt almost happy. He was so kind to her so often, and such a good fellow; he would surely say yes, and her heart beat quickly as she laid her head on his breast. She was so foolishly bored, so restless, too, he might for once let her be happy in her own way.

He rocked backward and forward, holding her in his arms, as he had often seen her nurse their child, and a soft little ripple of a smile gradually spread over her cheeks and her color rose as she whispered: "Old stupid!"

"Kiss me," he said under his breath; "kiss me as you did long ago, little Ju!"

She sat up and looked at him, but his eyes were half closed and she saw no passion in his face, only the content which she had so often seen there after a good dinner. She turned cold again and kissed him as she had kissed him a thousand times. But she had wronged him. He sighed, put her gently down, straightened his coat and tie and said briskly: "Well, well, it is getting late now and Strange will be wondering when I am coming. I must go!"

She said nothing, but wearily walked over to the table to get her writing things in order to begin her letters.

"Ju!" he said suddenly. "I'm going to take you, after all, but you must change all this," pointing to her tea gown, "and put on the oldest and least conspicuous clothes you have."

She clapped her hands as she swept round and faced him.

"Dear old Benny," she said happily; "at last I'm going to have a holiday—but—but—" and she took hold of a button of his waistcoat and twisted it about, "you won't suddenly change your mind and bring me away, will you?"

He laughed. "No, little one, I'll let you be, as you say, a good chum, and you shall do just what you like and see how much bored you'll be in the end."

"I expect nothing, for I know nothing," she said.

He waved his hand and looked at the clock.

"Quick, Ju! And dress as smartly as a chum ought to do."

"By Jove!" he muttered when she had gone, "I expect she'll be awfully disgusted, if I know women as I think I do, and I believe I am a bit of a fool to risk this; and yet"—with a yawn—"I'm bored myself, and this climate somehow makes a man long to play the devil, if it is only with new sensations."

He bit his lip and thought about Ju. It was quite novel to see so much of her. Since their honeymoon he had not been continually with her except the week their child was ill with fever, and then, night and day, they shared the watching. His work called him out late, and he often got home in the small hours of the morning and slept in his dressing room for fear of disturbing her, and came down long after she had done half her morning's work. This holiday was half a pleasure and half an ordeal, as it left her so much on his hands. She spoke very little Spanish, and had made no friends as yet, so he had to amuse her as well as he could; but his work claimed him, and he wished she had more resources. Anyhow, he was going to amuse her tonight, and he grinned as he thought of the situation. "To take one's wife to the lowest dancing café in the town because she is bored is surely a sign of the times."

"Ah! Ready?" he called out, as Ju appeared in the somewhat dowdy and ungraceful clothes which most respectable Englishwomen don as a sign of their virtue.

"Come along then!" Outside he hailed a cab and they drove to the hotel where Strange was staying. Ben found Strange with a friend who had unexpectedly arrived on rather important journalistic business, so Ju and he were left to their own resources. The cabman grinned the pleasant, understanding grin of the Spaniard when Ben told him where to drive. Ju sat close to her husband and felt strange thrills creeping over her as she realized how near they were to those unknown pleasures which are carefully hidden from women. When they had paid their cabman, Ben led the way and Ju followed close at his heels with a little nervous flutter at the heart, for the passages were very dark and evil smelling. An old woman with a dark silk handkerchief tied over her head sat on a stool under the one feeble gas jet near the stairs, patiently waiting for someone to buy her little cakes or packets of sweets, and as she looked at Ju she smiled slowly and solemnly at

the younger woman with the rested look nearly all old Spanish women have.

Up flights of narrow, dirty stairs Ju valiantly followed Ben till at last they came to a passage at the end of which were narrow stalls somewhat like English horse boxes, with the information on them that a bottle of wine was the price of admission. These boxes looked down upon a stage, and Ben chose one where they could see both audience and performers. Ju almost clapped her hands at the sudden sight of the audience which faced her from below, and she leaned over the rail with her heart beating with pleasure. Scores of young Spanish peasants, with their large, gray hats, colored ties and gay, thick waistbands, appeared as living pictures before the flaring gas jets which lighted the stage. Their faces were alive with a frank, happy sensuality, as is the natural manner of the Spaniard. They eagerly watched the movements of the girl before them as she danced lightly and easily and so close to them that they could have touched her as she passed. The more amorous of the crowd stood, and as she glided up and down the little stage, threw their hats before her as a sign that they laid down their hearts for her to trample on. As she finished, she threw the hats back to the expectant crowd, except one which she put jauntily on her head before returning it. The owner caught it as she laughingly flung it in the right direction, and the happy youth gave a yell of pleasure as he looked round at his fellows.

Ju felt she needed a hundred eyes; she had rarely been so alive. The magnetic power of all those happy people on and off the stage entered her veins like strong wine. She was oblivious to the gaze of Ben, who was watching her with interest and wondering when she would tire of it all. She turned from the audience to the stage. Six women sat in chairs in a row, and in the midst of them a man who played the guitar. She had not time to examine their dresses and wonderful shawls, for one of the women had come forward and was beginning to dance,

while the rest kept time to the music of the guitar with castenets, and others clapped their hands rhythmically and stamped their feet, encouraging the dancer to swifter movements.

Ben looked at Ju and held his breath a little as he realized, perhaps for the first time in his life, what modesty must mean to a woman, but he saw only a faint color in his wife's cheeks from the excitement of the scene, and her mouth, a little open, showed how absorbed she was. The dancer became more and more sensuous in her movements; her hands, her smiling face, her head thrown back, all expressed the inexpressible in actions which brought frantic applause from the audience. The shouts of the men below and the stamping and clapping of those on the stage continued after the girl was seated, and the few old peasant women, who were dozing with folded arms in the empty boxes, looked down with smiling patience, for they had memories.

Then a cry went up from the front benches as a tall, large-limbed woman stepped forward very gravely and slowly. The white flowers, which formed the chief part of her headdress, intensified the blackness of her hair, which was dressed in the soft coils and curls, always a very conspicuous part of a Spanish woman's toilet. She wore a long, soft, blue and white skirt, which clung to her large limbs, half hiding, half revealing their beauty. Over this she had only a large Manila shawl of the most exquisite white silk, embroidered in the middle with blue flowers in an elaborate pattern, and this, when she opened out her arms, made her look like a gorgeous human butterfly. Her neck was bare, and an old, thin, gold chain emphasized the whiteness and beauty of the throat. The long, heavy fringe of the shawl gave a touch of solidity to the whole. She ran quickly and gently to the music of the guitar and the murmur of the castenets, played now as mere accompaniments to movement, and not, as before, as part of the stampede. Then she halted in the middle of the stage

and the music grew softer still. Above the dark head and beautiful throat, the lines of which the soft silk hid and yet displayed, the long arms appeared as the heavy fringe fell away and showed their whiteness. Now she apparently danced with her hands, for her feet only kept time to the music. Long, white, beautiful hands they were; the hands of the artist. Hither and thither they moved over the graceful head, interlacing, curving, beseeching, swaying in a rhythmic chastity of movement.

Then suddenly the whole woman grew more and more alive. The witchery of the supple fingers passed into her whole body; every limb gradually followed the impetus given by the hands and swung to the time of the music, which became louder and louder as the dancer grew more and more in love with her own movements. The coarse, good-natured jokes of the audience beneath her only served to intensify the rapidity of motion and the sensuous loveliness of that embodiment of passion and joy. She smiled as if in a spiritual ecstasy as her dancing grew swifter and swifter and the heavy silk fringe of her shawl swayed and swung around her large limbs and strong arms. Hands, feet, head, neck at last combined into a moving harmony in order to express the limitless joy of vigorous movement. Hats were thrown on the stage; men reddened and shouted with pleasure and suspense; the accompanists stamped and clapped louder than ever, and the castanets seemed to change into clanging bells as Dolores, intoxicated with love of her own exquisite art, gave in her last swaying movements the lie to her name of *Our Lady of Sorrow*.

Ju could scarcely breathe. She leaned over the rail, her face in her hands and a great sob in her throat. All the mad, wild beauty of the world seemed singing in her head as her eyes followed the retreating figure of the woman who had danced life into her tired brain. Never, even in church, she thought, had she felt so rested, so uplifted as now; rarely had she been so

absurdly happy. Her child's fingers against her breast, a lark singing in the early spring, the first primrose gathered for the year, all the simple, delicate joys of life had not given her the exquisite sense of rest that the vigorous movements of this dancing girl had done.

She had never seen real dancing before; only the contortions which in cold lands pass for the art. For the first time in her life she saw passion, grace, joy and vigor combined in the movements of a beautiful woman, who was as free from vulgarity and self-consciousness as a flower. She did not realize that the curtain was down until she heard Ben say in a constrained voice:

"I say, Ju! By Jove! Here comes a Spanish fellow I know—and that girl with him. He will introduce us, and what the deuce am I to do?"

She looked up in a dazed way and answered:

"Why, nothing!"

"Well—it can't be helped. Don't be rough on the girl, that's all, for it's really our fault being here."

He had no time for more, for the Spaniard was at his side, and Dolores with him. She looked at Ju in an open but inoffensively curious way, and then turned and smiled at Ben as if she had met him before. Ju's nervousness was evident. Ben attributed it to prudery, and cursed himself for bringing her out of her element. The Spaniard explained to Dolores that Ju was an English lady traveling for her health with her husband and the dancer gravely scrutinized the couple once more, and then sat down, spread out her knees and put a hand on each in the characteristic way of Spanish women. She drummed her fingers rapidly on her knees and smiled, with that peculiar happy solemnity which life in the sun makes a habit. Ju glanced at the beautiful rings on the long fingers, and nervously touched one as she asked Dolores hesitatingly if she were married. The smile slowly died from the dancer's face and a look of dismay grew into the large eyes as Dolores

crossed herself as a devout Catholic before the most subtle assault of the evil one. Ju became still more puzzled and alarmed at what she had said, for she saw Ben biting his mustache irritably. The Englishwoman looked into the eyes of the dancer and said nervously:

"What have I said to hurt you? I'm so sorry!"

The scared look swept swiftly from the face of Dolores and the light grew again in the beautiful eyes, as, with an easy smile and a shrug of the shoulders, she imitated the sound of the castanets with her strong fingers and thumbs as she looked into Ju's face, as if that were answer enough to her strange question. When the Spaniard, thinking he would please the other man, began to talk to her in rapid Spanish about her figure and her dancing, and about many things which can be lightly said in Spain and scarcely thought in England, she only looked at him in a half-serious and interrogative way, and at last, hitting him playfully on the shoulder, she turned to Ju and pointing to her forehead said jokingly, "Idiot!"

Ju had not understood a word, and as Dolores quietly and kindly eyed her from head to foot, she became more and more uncomfortable. She caught Ben's eye again, and blushed and stammered something about the dancing and the beautiful shawl.

Dolores lifted the heavy fringe and put it into the Englishwoman's hands for her to feel the weight. Ju said it must be very warm to dance in, and could not think of another word to say. Ben thought he had never seen his wife look so middleclass in his life, and he impatiently lit his cigarette, thinking how absurdly women drew lines of class distinction, and regretting that he had brought Ju out of her own sphere. He sighed as he handed a cigarette to the dancer, but she was smiling as she bowed, undid the paper, remade the cigarette, lighted it, drew one whiff and handed it to Ju with raised eyebrows as if to ask if Englishwomen smoked.

"Take it," said Ben in an undertone.

Ju took it and pressed the woman's

hand for thanks, and Dolores leaned forward for another with evident pleasure on her face. When she had lighted it her eyes traveled once more over the weary little face, the nervous hands and the badly clothed body of the woman before her, who had never really lived, for she had never danced, thought Dolores.

"How pretty her tie is!" she said, turning suddenly to her companion.

"Offer it to her," said Ben.

Ju began to untie the bow, but Dolores shook her head and turned toward Ben, who was ordering a bottle of Manzanilla. Then the situation became less strained. Dolores was quite at home as a hostess, and ordered the waiter to uncork the bottle as she pulled towards her the little wine cruet containing six narrow glasses, took the bottle and with a businesslike air poured out wine. Just as Ben thought of suggesting to Ju to say good-bye, the manager came up to the group and asked the Spaniard if his English friend would like Dolores to dance in a little side room before they left and while the play was being finished below. Ju clapped her hands at this, but Ben's eyes grew grave; he half closed them as he looked at his wife and then at the dancer. There were things he was not prepared to risk. He said something rapidly in Spanish to the manager, which Ju could not hear, but she caught the answer: "On no account, señor, will anything be done to displease the charming English lady."

The little group then went into a side room, bare except for a bench, a table and a few chairs, and the man with the guitar and a small group of dancers flocked in with the mothers and aunts who chaperoned their charges every night. Hornpipes were danced to much clapping and shouting, extraordinary movements executed by beginners in the art, voluptuous swayings, half dance, half dramatic pose, performed by a handsome woman in black silk and lace. Then Dolores stood up and turned to the Englishwoman, by whom she had sat while the others danced, and whose hand she had held

in the intervals of clapping and stamping. "Shall I dance for you once more?" she said very slowly and gently. Ju only smiled as she answered with a nod of the head. Dolores then began to dance as if to express herself as well as her art; gravity, egotism, passion, joy, abandonment and, above all, a sweet temperance and sanity breathed through her movements. When she had finished she came back to her place by the side of Ju, and the clapping and cries of "Dolores!" went on for some time. She looked at Ju and raised her brows. "Pleased with me?" she asked simply. The English-woman pressed her hand for answer, and realized more of the beauty in the world than ever before, but why, she could not tell. Suddenly there was a call from below for the dancers, and the company filed out. The two men went to settle accounts with the manager at the door, and the English-woman and the dancing girl were left alone.

They turned and faced each other; with a mutual impulse they sought each other's eyes, and each felt in the other's look the inevitableness of her lot as a woman. No dancing for Dolores, no husband's care for Ju, could alter that—the tragedy which

lurks unseen, and sooner or later crushes women in their own stronghold of the emotions. It was a moment's revelation, and Ju and the dancer were for an instant one in a mutual comprehension of forces. The two women kissed in silence, their eyes lowered before the sorrow they had caught in each other's faces.

Ben entered and seized Ju roughly by the arm. "Come along; what a time you are!" he said, and lifting his hat to Dolores, almost dragged his wife into the dark corridor.

"What the devil were you doing with that woman?" he asked savagely. "Have you forgotten you are a lady and my wife? Come home, for goodness sake! The wine has got into your head."

Ju turned towards the little room she had left; the lights were still lit, and Dolores stood in the entrance, the jewels sparkling on her white throat and the whole woman transfigured as she peered into the darkness looking after her new friend, her lips apart and a look of dismay in her eyes.

Ben's voice and the rough "Come on!" roused Ju to turn her head away from the dancer, but not before she had seen Dolores making the sign of the cross as she vanished out of sight.



F U L F I L L M E N T

By HENRY KIRK

IF I should stand upon a mountain high
 And look abroad to all the lands afar,
 From earth to space, to heaven's further star,
 The tops of trees, the distant lands of sky,
 The worlds the winds bear as they blow them by;
 If I should ever ride the sun's gold car
 From dawn-land, where the morning lilies are,
 To dusk-land, to the fairy firefly,
 And know each thing in all the space above,
 The dear, dim sky drenched in the dripping dew,
 What would it be, each joy day that I love—
 A lake with reeds, a song, a silver dove;
 If I should hold all that I ever knew,
 What would it be, if I should not have you?

TO THE THREE

By MINNIE GOODNOW

THE Reverend Theodore Osborne picked up a letter with a half-consciousness that the writing was familiar, looked for the signature, then tore it across and threw it upon his desk. He walked to the window and stood for a moment clenching his hands. He came back with face gray and lined, took up the paper, and piecing it together, sat down and read:

DEAR THEODORE:

I have no right to call you by that name, but when you read this I shall be dead and it will not matter. They tell me I can live only a short time.

Theodore, I want you to know for one forceful moment what woman's love is, and I want that knowledge to enrich the very foundations of your being.

You, Theodore, were my first love, and, I have sometimes thought, my only one; but only loves are out of fashion, and even first loves are hard to find nowadays. I had never been a sentimental girl, and I had honestly not expected to marry. I did not admit it even to myself, but from the day of our acquaintance you were a part of my life. I was born a hero worshiper. You appeared, and I knew that the hero had come.

Today, with my years of experience behind me, I can understand why you were attracted to me. Then it seemed a marvel that you, a man who had already proved himself a leader of men, a man who might by a look have brought any woman to his side, that you should care for me! The thought exalted me.

You taught me love. Hitherto, I had been thought cold—had thought

myself cold. Now, my whole being flamed out in an ardent tenderness. I had not imagined such possibilities of loving.

Now began my lessons in the expression of love. My Spartan training did not make me an apt pupil. You were experienced in those things—more so, perhaps, than I could have wished—and you showed me the little ways which are so satisfying to a man and so dear to a woman. After a time I made some progress.

Then the trouble! I know now that it was your secret which made it hard for me to understand you, as it was my reserve which disappointed you. But, Theodore, if you had only been frank with me while you were near me! It was asking much that you should, face to face, tell me the wretched tale. Written, it was revolting, terrible to me. With your hand in mine it might have been easier to bear. In the face of my love for you it was not unforgivable. Whether I could ever have forgotten it, I do not know.

Then the final break: to you the loosening of a tie which had begun to chafe; to me a drop into an abyss. And this is the great horror of an abyss, that it is empty. No man can conceive the awful aloneness of a woman's life when love has gone out of it and the years stretch vacantly ahead of her. To die would have been so easy. Living has been my curse. I have been praised; I have been admired; I have been loved. I have won success, nay, fame; almost—and have hated it.

It seems needless that our paths should have crossed. It was best that they diverged after we had learned our

lesson. Difficult and awful learning it was for me. You were quickly consoled, and I have ever truly wished you success and joy. I have not envied, but rather congratulated, that other woman.

Theodore, I say good-bye. If some day we find that the old-fashioned tales are true, and as I walk down the golden streets I pass you with a casual nod and a greeting, may God grant that both our hearts be without a pang.

KATHLEEN.

The Reverend Theodore Osborne tore the letter into bits, went to the open grate and threw the pieces into the fire.

"What creatures women are! I hadn't thought of her in years. And to think—a hero! Lord! I was a damned coward! Well, death is sometimes a blessing."

He put on his hat, called to his wife, "Persis, I'm going out to make some calls—may not be back for dinner," and slammed the door.

Richard Hudson tore open his letter and paled as he realized who the writer was. He put it back into the envelope and slipped it into his breast pocket. He set out the sign, "Will be back in an hour," and took the car for Freshfield Park. In an unfrequented spot fronting the lake he read the letter:

DEAR MR. HUDSON:

I promised, if ever I needed your help, to let you know. I do not need it. I write only to say good-bye. They tell me I shall live but a little while, and I have been tempted to try to see you before I go, but I know that I must not.

Why was it that we attracted one another? It seemed a bitter irony of fate. True, you were younger than I—in years—but do years always make age? I knew then that I did not love you. Sometimes now I think that I do. And if you did not love me, the emotion you felt was the usual substitute for the "grand passion."

We understood each other. That, dear, is the foundation of all lasting

affection. I can never forget your passionate love making. I had known man's love before, but never had I seen it in such soul-wrenching, ruthless forcefulness. You must have guessed how I longed to respond. You must have seen how it took all the strength of my womanhood to resist the torrents of your passion for me. Yet I dared not yield. One step more would have wrecked my life and your career. I made my utmost effort, sent you away and saved you and myself.

Can you ever forget that moonlight night on the river? Can you ever forget that afternoon in the woods? You and sunshiny, summery Nature are indissolubly joined in my memory.

When you read this, my heart fires will be burned out, my soul longings stilled. Yours—do you know what you must do with them? Did I not tell you that last night we were together? They must be offered ever upon the altar of that sweet woman who bears your name. She must never know how you and I wronged her. She must find your love flame burning for her to the end. Kindle it afresh, and fan it, not too roughly. The fuel is sufficient, if you do not waste it.

Good-bye, dear.

KATHIE.

Richard Hudson, as he read the second sheet, kissed it impulsively. He went on to the close, then threw himself on the ground with the letter under his face. "Oh, Kathie, Kathie! I used to tell you, and I tell you now, love is hell!"

He went, not to the office, but home.

"Am I early? Business was dull today. Nellie, little woman, come here." He took her in his arms. "You know I love you, don't you? Nellie dear, don't you ever doubt it. And if I forget to tell you so, remind me of it."

Then he held her close and gave her kisses until she gasped for breath. She nestled there on his shoulder and murmured wonderingly, "Yes, Richard, I know that you love me."

John Eastwood picked up the letter which he had left till the last, went into his private office and closed and snapped the door. Standing, he cut it open, and read it through:

DEAR MR. EASTWOOD:

I am having this letter mailed to you after I am dead. That sounds cheaply tragic, but there was no other time nor way to tell you these things.

Your interest in my success has been so kindly and so unfeigned that under ordinary circumstances I should thank you for it. As it is, I am heartily sorry that it must cease.

I never understood you—a humiliating confession for a woman to make. The peculiar bond between us was one which is stronger than either love or friendship, and sometimes less galling than the marriage tie. I have always thought that you cared for me. There have been times when I thought that you loved me. I know that I fascinated you, as you did me, and inspired in you a passion which made you almost—never quite—reckless of consequences.

For myself, I have usually hated you, but with a hatred so strong that it was akin to love.

Love I had known before you became my friend, but of passion I knew nothing. You taught me passion, and I proved myself so apt a pupil that after a time even you were satisfied and ready to substitute for it some safer and less tempestuous emotion. By turns I sought you, scorned you, clung to you, repelled you. You added to my heart loneliness physical loneliness; besides a vacant heart, you gave me empty arms. The fire of love was eating out my soul; the scorching breath of passion seared my flesh.

Why we ended with a friendship has

been incomprehensible to me. Many a time I have hated you; but you have persisted in that steady, patient interest in me and in my work, so that I occasionally think that you love me.

Good-bye. Can you remember the old, passionate kiss? Can you recall the looks of love which you gave me? Would God care, think you, if as I go out of life, I should turn for a moment to you and to that look? Good-bye. It may be forever. I know not.

Yours,

KATHLEEN.

Eastwood finished and laid the paper down, drawing his hand away from it as though it burned. "Land!" he ejaculated. "I never thought she cared like that! What a pity that a woman of her brains should die young!"

For a moment he was almost pensive, then gave a start.

"I wonder if it is possible—"

He made a dash for the door, snatched a telegraph blank from the desk outside and wrote a message. He rang for the boy, gave him the telegram and told him to rush it.

He went back to the private office, lighted a match and burned the letter a sheet at a time. He took from a drawer a small picture and gave it careful attention. Then he flung it back saying, "It never did her justice. Lord, but she was pretty!"

In the afternoon the boy came in with a wire. Eastwood waited till he had gone, then eagerly tore it open. He read:

Miss Worden died Thursday morning.

He crushed the paper in his hand, and sat staring vacantly.

"And to think she cared like that! If only I had known!"



THE average woman values a man's love according to the amount of jealousy he displays.

A SILVER KEY

By W. CAREY WONDERLY

"YOU mean— Miles, he is dying, dying! Middleton has always said the third stroke would be fatal and now—"

"I mean—" the man hesitated, lost for a word. "Ethel, this thing cannot be! It is brutal, I know, for me to say this, but you must know, we both must understand, just how things are. Five years ago—"

"Five years ago!" The woman turned impatiently away. "No, no, no, Miles! Five years ago! I was a child then, a child, Miles."

"And I was a poor devil of a painter chap without money or friends," he said bitterly.

"Miles!"

"It is true. But I loved you—you loved me—five years ago."

"I love you now," she whispered. "I love you and I want you, dear. Oh, if you only knew what my life has been! Sir John— I do not believe such men as he have either hearts or souls. No, no, he has never struck me—I don't mean that. He is perfect; yes, that's it, he's perfect! He would not do an unkind act; he would not raise his voice in anger for all the wealth of the Indies! He is perfect, not a man, but a living, tailored copy of the ten commandments! He has a halo! I must get away from him or I shall go mad!"

"I know Sir John Arden to be a just and generous man," said Miles, slowly.

"A just and generous man! Don't you know that such a creature is doubly repugnant to a woman like myself? I tell you, I must get away from him or I shall go mad. You are going to Egypt—"

Farren groaned. "Hush, hush; they will hear you! There is Mrs. Tylour now. She has the longest tongue in Washington."

"I do not care who hears me. I have thrown everything to the winds. Those five long, torturous years with that man, that just and generous man— Miles—Ugh! It is like some nightmare! Oh, Miles, Miles, where is that little cottage, our little cottage with your brushes and my flowers?"

"You have thrown it away for Arden Hall; a most wise and prudent act for one so young," he said slowly.

"I was a fool, a child, and I knew no better. You were poor and the little cottage and the one maid . . . Everyone laughed so! It was madness, simply madness, to say no to Sir John. He was wealthy and—and mother—oh, it was all, all mother's fault!"

"It is like a woman to shift the burden of her sins on another's shoulders," said the man, with something like contempt in his voice.

"But, Miles, you must know. Listen: I was young and afraid of poverty. Yes, perhaps it was in part my fault, but I was not afraid to be poor, just simply poor. I was afraid and people said— Everyone laughed! Love in a cottage—pouf! Miles, I was frightened, frightened, and I married that man quick—quick!"

"You certainly lost little time," he taunted her.

"I knew if I gave myself time to think I would cry out for you and—and—how could any woman be happy with him? Just and generous, yes. And that's all; first and last, he

is simply just and generous. Why, Gwen is almost as old as I am, Miles, a great, grown girl of twenty! She would call me 'Mother' if I did not say no to anything so ridiculous. She is twenty and I am three years older. Sir John is a hundred, hundreds and hundreds of years old. I tell you, I must get away from them both."

For a moment the man wavered. "Ethel," "he said, a little frown clouding his frank face, "won't you be reasonable?"

The woman beat her hands convulsively together. "I'm so tired, Miles," she cried. "I'm so tired of it all—all!"

From her place on the oak settle, nestling down among the cushions, Ethel Arden looked marvelously girlish and attractive. As she turned her face slightly towards him, the man noticed her tired, unnaturally bright eyes and the pathetic droop to the corners of her babyish mouth. She was essentially a woman created to be loved and cherished. Quickly Miles Farren's thoughts flashed back to the time when he had first seen her, a little more than a schoolgirl, at Lenox, just five years ago. Yes, he believed that she had loved him then. Well, that was all through with now. The tragedy, farce—call it what you will—had been played to the end, and now he must tell her about Gwen.

Gathering courage, Farren moved his chair a trifle closer to Lady Arden's. "If there were anything at all in this world that I could do to help you, Ethel, you surely know that I would go through fire and water, if need be, to accomplish that end. But it seems to me that things had better stop—"

"Words, words, words! Don't let us waste time or thought over the past, the present. It is the future, *our* future, Miles, that we must think about. Oh, boy, to know that our cottage is just ahead of us at last!"

"Ethel!"

"We will be happy, so happy, Miles! You will have your paints and brushes, and I my flowers. And then I shall

have chickens, and perhaps we may keep a cow. A real live cow, Miles, and we will play at dairying as they did at Versailles in the long ago. We will be happy. You are not a 'just and generous man,' Miles; no, thank God, you are just my boy, my own dear boy. And these years, these five unspeakable years, will seem like one long dream, a horrid nightmare from which we have awakened to find the world still fresh and beautiful and happy because we are. Miles, our little cottage— Oh, those days, those dark days with that 'just and generous man'! Miles, Miles, I'm so tired—tired! I am glad, glad he is dying!"

She put out her hand to come to him, but the man, staring with wild eyes into the heart of the fire, did not see her, and stood like one turned to stone. From the studio beyond came the laughter of his guests mingled with the voice of Dicky Carruth, who was singing some bizarre coon song at the piano. As in a dream there came to his ears the sound of falling china and then more laughter. Vera Tylour was, of course, making a Welsh rabbit. She was always making Welsh rabbit, that woman. An hour before they had swept down upon him like a lot of vultures, and Vera Tylour, rousing him from his dream before the fire, had announced their intrusion as a surprise party. "We've been to be shocked by 'The Labyrinth' and now we want to be fed," Mrs. Tylour had shouted. And now, while he and Ethel Arden sat together in the little curtained alcove, the others made the night hideous with strange noises and worse odors, and Vera Tylour scolded his man, Harley, and Dicky Carruth sang music-hall ditties in his funny little English voice.

"Miles!" she cried.

Farren turned and seated himself opposite her. "Yes?" he said, fixing his cold gray eyes on her face.

"Miles!" Her voice was little more than a whisper.

"For God's sake, Ethel, what are you doing?" cried the man. "What is to be gained by all this? How will it all end? When? Where? If Vera

Tylour should happen to draw aside those curtains—"

"Vera Tylour cannot afford to do anything so *gauche*," scoffed Lady Arden. "She is not an idiot. The rest of them, Gwen, Dicky, Esingham are, so what's the odds? Miles, tell me—men are so different from women, thank God!—if you found yourself entangled with one whom you hated and despised with all your heart—tell me, what would you do?"

"Ethel"—Farren stared thoughtfully into the fire for a time, then met the woman's eyes with a hard, determined look. "Ethel, I want to tell you something. I am going to Egypt—alone."

"Alone!" A little smile, as though she did not quite catch his meaning, played around the woman's mouth.

"Alone!" Suddenly she dropped her eyes and began beating a tattoo on the arm of the settle. "Alone?" she puzzled. "Alone, Miles—oh!"

"Alone. Alone, Ethel, because—because you are married and I—I—"

"Because I am married! Fancy such a silly reason! Miles, I am no longer a schoolgirl. I am a woman and so hard and weary and unfeeling, for so many years a mere plaything of Fate, that I just don't care for anything or anybody but just you."

Knowing Lady Arden as he did, Miles Farren was surprised at her rash declaration. He knew that she did not have a shred of affection for Sir John; at times he had idly wondered if she had quite forgotten that summer at Lenox, but never before, by word or deed, had she let him know that she still loved him with all the warmth and ardor of the long ago. And now, when it was too late, she sat opposite him and carefully mapped out their future.

"Miles!" She got up, and coming over to his side put her white, jeweled hand upon his shoulder. "I have tried to be patient and calm, dear, but—oh, those long, weary years with that man! And through all that time I have striven with all my soul to play my part so that the world might not guess the truth. I think that there is no person in Washington who knows, who

guesses what we two are to one another. There have been times when, meeting you at different houses, I have longed to feel your dear arms around me, and sob out my grievances on your breast. But never once have I let myself go! People call me cold, but they do not know. I must not spoil your career; the British Ambassador's wife must be above suspicion. That has been my loadstar! But tonight—forgive me, Miles. I must have been insane indeed a moment ago. But to know that there is at last sunrise ahead of me, that he will never get well again! It has turned my brain, that knowledge! Sir John is dying. Middleton told me only this morning. Miles, after all these years it has come at last!"

Farren sat like one in a dream. Yes, it had come at last, and with it the course which she took it for granted he would take. But he could not marry Ethel Arden. Even had there not been Gwen, he knew that he could never have married Sir John's widow. And now, with her confession, a sudden repugnance, a horror of this woman took hold of him and refused to be shaken off. He would tell her now, at once, about Gwen Arden. He loved, not Sir John's wife, but Sir John's daughter, the girl who had been such a thorn in her step-mother's side. From the studio came a deafening noise. Evidently the late supper was well under way. With misgivings Farren thought of Gwen in there mingling with those worldlings. What did she think of them? What did she think of him for allowing such vulgarity in his house?

In the future he would avoid such creatures. Vera Tylour—it was such women as she that made the world the place it is.

"Miles."

The man half turned his head.

"You are not angry with me?"

"Angry? No." Farren shook his head. "Only, Ethel—"

"Only what, Miles?"

"Only—" He raised his eyes and met her big, babyish orbs fixed upon his face in troubled intricacy. "Whatever Sir John has made your life—you

say it has been a failure—whatever Sir John Arden has made your life, you alone are to blame, Ethel. You married him with your eyes open, just as you jilted me. Oh, I don't blame you or reproach you; only, you are still Sir John Arden's wife, the wife of a man whom I must respect, knowing his career as I do. Five years ago—"

"Five years ago you wrote me this"—with trembling fingers she drew forth from the bosom of her gown a faded, creased sheet of paper and laid it on the man's knee. "Oh, Miles!" she murmured again as she crouched among the cushions of the settle.

Farren looked at the note with contracted brows. "What is it, please?" he asked, somewhat impatiently.

"Read it," Lady Arden nodded from among the cushions.

"But—" The man tore it ruthlessly apart and glanced hastily down the closely written page. "What nonsense!" he said directly, folding it back in its creases.

"Five years," she told him, with a little shake of her head. "Five years ago you wrote me that little note. Ever since it has been constantly by me. It was your first letter, Miles, your very first. Call me romantic, silly, if you will, but the little faded letter has been more than once my salvation. It has kept me through all these years, Miles, gained for me the name of being a beautiful icicle, nothing more; it has kept me true for you. Oh, to you men these little things are so meaningless, but to a woman—" She looked at Farren and smiled wanly. "You are not angry with me, Miles? I know I am silly, a creature of moods, but I am a woman and I love you."

The man made no answer, but with the note between his fingers gazed steadily into the fire. It was such an easy thing to drop the telltale letter into the heart of the glowing coals, and Ethel, when she knew about Gwen, what would she not do and say? The more he thought of it the greater became the fascination of the living, sighing fire, and suddenly, with a little cry of satisfaction, he

leaned forward and threw the one link in the chain of their past into the leaping, eager flames. There was a little puff, a flash, and a few smoldering, gray-ing ashes. Then the fire resumed its ruddy, laughing light, sending out a soothing, cheerful murmur like the purring of a happy cat.

"I want to tell you something." Farren left his chair and going over to the open grate fire stood looking down into Lady Arden's uplifted face. "I love Gwen, Sir John's daughter. I have loved her—always, I think, and I want to marry her."

If he had expected the woman to cry out, to make a scene at the gross brutality of his words, he was mistaken. Slowly the smile deepened on her childishly pretty face, and with the characteristic shrug of her shoulders she dropped her eyes.

"So you love Gwen, eh?"

"Yes, Ethel—"

"Because she is very much as I was at her age?"

"No. Because she is—because she is Gwen."

"And you want to marry her?"

"I shall speak—to Sir John tomorrow. And I rely upon you to help me, Ethel," he said boldly.

"You men are funny creatures, Miles. I tell you that I love you madly, am willing to leave husband, home, position, everything for you; and you, you answer that you love my step-daughter and ask me to plead your cause. A most charming plot for an Ibsen drama or a farce comedy, Miles, but rather out of the common in this world of today. Now if I were one of Mr. Ibsen's puppets I would lay your love letter at Gwen's feet and— But no, you burned my letter; I forgot. In the play, though, I would have another, one that would make the North Pole look like a summer's day. Perhaps I have."

Farren drew a deep breath, a sudden feeling of some unseen danger gripping his heart as he met the woman's smiling, mocking eyes. He had never quite understood Ethel Arden, and now everything seemed wild confusion. Could it be possible that she did not

care? He tried to think, but his brain whirled, and all he could remember was the color of Ethel Arden's eyes. They were blue, soft and childishly pretty.

"Miles!" She almost hissed the word, leaning towards him like a lioness about to spring.

The man shook his head. "Tomorrow, at eleven, I shall be at the Embassy, and I expect you to see me through. I rather expect a little trouble with Sir John, for he is, I know, very fond of his daughter, but you will be there and I will rely upon you. Tomorrow, at eleven. Come, I am sure supper is ready!"

"And me—what will become of me—afterward?"

"You? Lady Arden will be the smartest widow in Washington."

"I never looked well in black," she reflected.

"Ethel!" Farren tried to laugh, but failed miserably. "What a consummate little actress you are! Don't you think I see, that I guess? You have been playing a part, capitally, wonderfully, I own, but I see through your disguise! I have been weighed in the balance and found—a fitting candidate for Miss Gwendolin Arden's hand?"

The woman frowned in her own delicious way. "I shall never forgive you, Miles Farren," she said, pettishly. "You have spoiled my splendid *dénouement*. How did you guess? A consummate actress indeed! You have wounded my woman's vanity, and I shall tell Sir Johnny to say no. Come, I am hungry as a hunter."

"Ethel, you will help me, you will, *mon amie*?" cried Farren, catching her hand. "How did I guess? I would have been a conceited fellow, indeed, to think for one moment that Lady Arden would yield her adoring world to share the lot of a painter chap like myself. You are fond of Gwen—oh, yes you are!—and before Sir John gave her to me you wanted to make sure that the moth had outlived his desire for the flame. I throw myself upon your kindness, Lady Arden. As you are great, be merciful."

"Now you are laughing at me," she

said childishly. "Laughing, laughing, laughing, yes! And I am not fond of Gwen or anybody. I am a beautiful icicle—see any of the society journals, Mr. Farren."

"I think you are the—"

"Hush!" Lady Arden warned him. Standing in the doorway were Mrs. Tylour, Gwen and Dicky Carruth.

"Oh, I say, spooning!" laughed Vera Tylour. "Gwen, my child, catch your stepmummy in the very act! *Dieu*, you are both old enough to know better!"

"Oh, I say!" cried Dicky.

"We've been calling you for the last ten minutes," said Gwen.

"No doubt it was all very interesting," sighed Mrs. Tylour. "I remember when I was in love. He was an actor and wore blond hair; I was twelve, pig-tailed and bow-legged. Thank heaven, I am not now!"

"But isn't it time to feed the beasts?" queried Dicky anxiously. "Oh, I say!"

"Come on, Farren—Ethel," cried Vera. "We've ransacked your pantry, my boy—beer, oysters and a Welsh rabbit. It's to eat!"

"It's to eat, ha—ha!" laughed the delighted Dicky, and they followed their hostess into the studio.

"Good night." Lady Arden held out her hand and smiled into the man's face. "You will see Sir John tomorrow?"

"Yes;" Farren's answer was decisive.

She nodded with perfect understanding. "Very well; I shall be there."

"Sir John will say yes."

"Now I make no rash assertions," she laughed. "But you know faint heart never won fair lady, Mr. Farren."

"I believe you will help me," said the man quietly.

They were standing in the studio. Vera Tylour and Dicky and the other guests were outside in the hall. Farren could hear Vera scolding his man Harley.

Lady Arden looked cautiously over her shoulder.

Gwen was still at the piano. Farren had forgotten Gwen was in the room.

Lady Arden hesitated for a moment. She knew that what she was about to do was small and mean and cowardly, but she loved Miles Farren, loved him deeply, wildly, and the knowledge that he loved Gwen chilled her very heart. The girl should not have him. She was willing to give and to lose all that a woman can to keep them apart.

"Gwen!" she called suddenly. "My muff—will you see if I left it in the alcove there?"

Farren started quickly to his feet, but she caught his arm and held him back. "No, no!" she whispered.

"Your muff, Ethel?" Gwen left the piano and silently disappeared beyond the Gobelin curtains. Her cheeks were aflame—she felt that this was but a ruse on Ethel's part to be alone with Farren.

"Come, I have something to say to you," began Lady Arden, making room for the man on the divan. She must talk, talk, talk; say something to keep him with her for the little space of five minutes. Then—it was just the smallest possible chance that Gwen would find the key, but life was made up of chances, and surely something was owed her when she was losing so much. She was staking her very soul upon this, her last throw. Surely she must win.

Gwen, in the alcove, flushed and ashamed, stopped in the middle of the floor, and went over and over again the events of the evening. Could it be that Miles Farren loved her father's wife? She could no longer be blind to the fact that Ethel loved him. Vera Tylour had more than once intimated as much, but then Mrs. Tylour was the most notorious scandalmonger in the capital, and Ethel—was her father's wife.

She was no fool, this mere slip of a girl, Gwendolin Arden, but in Miles she saw the stuff of heroes. He was the ideal of her girlhood, and she was only too willing to close her eyes as long as she well could. Vera Tylour had acquainted her with Ethel's old love

affair with Miles, but she had never given it countenance.

Crossing to the chimney shelf, she rested one arm upon the ledge and stood looking down into the smoldering logs. No sounds came from the studio beyond. Here, by herself, with just the tiny blaze for company, shut in from all disturbances, she knew that she loved Farren. She felt that she had loved him always—and yet she had known him but a little while. Only she was afraid. If she found afterward that the crown of her hero was of pasteboard and tinsel, she knew the knowledge would kill her.

Suddenly, with a little gesture, she raised her head, and there on the mantelshelf, smiling down at her, was a picture of herself. It was only a rough newspaper print that Farren had clipped from a society journal, such a poor, sorry little picture to be burdened with an oval silver frame, but Miles had cut it from the paper and saved and cherished it. A tender smile crept around the girl's mouth.

"Gwen! Gwen, where are you?" There was a slight noise in the room beyond, and Lady Arden called her name in hurried tones.

Gwen hurriedly replaced the picture, and with crimson face began searching among the cushions of the settle for the missing muff. It was nowhere to be seen. Then, just as she was going back to Ethel, she saw Farren's old painting jacket.

Some impulse, a sudden burst of emotion, made her catch it up and press it against her flushed cheeks. As she held it thus, something fell from one of the pockets upon the polished floor. Gwen stopped to pick it up. The thing was a key, a flat silver key of Japanese design, with the monogram set in tiny seed pearls, and as Gwen turned it slowly over in her hand her heart turned faint within her. For the letters were E. C. A. and the key was one of those to Lady Arden's private apartments in the Embassy.

How it happened in Miles Farren's pocket, Gwen never stopped to ask. That Farren had seen little of her fa-

ther's wife during the past few years never occurred to her. She only knew the key was there, there in Farren's pocket, and she remembered Vera Tylour's shrugs and smiles. Her eyes grew unnaturally large and bright as she gazed at the telltale key in awful fascination. The man she loved and her father's wife—oh, the name that rose up and claimed them!

"Gwen!"

Turning, the girl saw Ethel Arden beside her. Quickly she opened her hand and offered the woman the quaint silver key.

"This is yours, I think," she said quietly. "I could not find your muff. Oh, you have it, yes."

"Why, why—" Lady Arden's fingers closed over the key and her voice trembled. "How stupid of—him. And how like Miles! You found it?"

"Yes, on the settle. You must have dropped it when you were talking to Mr. Farren," returned the girl, with studied indifference. "Are you ready? Do let us go!"

For a moment Ethel Arden was silent. Then, with an ugly little laugh, she called Farren.

He stopped in the doorway, waiting, afraid.

"Oh, come here!" Lady Arden cried

shrilly. "See this! Gwen found it upon the settle. Of course, she is only a child; she knows nothing, but— If this is all the care you take—of things—"

Farren stared stupidly at the key. Now he thoroughly appreciated Ethel Arden's way of revenge. It must come through Gwen.

"My God!" he cried piteously.

He turned to Gwendolin and in her face he saw a look of contempt that silenced his lips forever. He felt that explanations were useless; never could he explain to her the facts which stood out as clear as day to himself. That Ethel Arden had herself placed the key in his pocket not half an hour ago, he knew; that nothing he could say would convince Gwen of this truth, he likewise was sure. He must bow to the inevitable and Ethel Arden.

"I shall tell Sir John to expect you at eleven," began Lady Arden airily. "Of course he will be surprised. Gwennie is such a child, but—"

Farren raised his hand. Gwen had met his glance, and into her eyes there had come a look of distrust, contempt and fear.

"Tomorrow I leave town, Lady Arden," he said, "on my promised trip to Egypt—alone."



A W A K E N I N G

By ALDIS DUNBAR

WHO defies love to spring
 Within a heart that sleeps,
 A stern and frozen thing,
 Hath soon forgot how slight
 A marvel 'tis for trees
 To blossom in a night!

ONE OF PEGGY'S ENGAGEMENT RINGS

By BETH THORNDYKE LORING

"**A**RE you dazzled?" asked Peggy.

I followed her glance down the long marble-topped counter before which we sat with our French heels comfortably caught on the footrail and our soda spoons in our hands. Between delicious little mounds of sun-dae in almost every known shade, from a brilliant cerise to the more sober chocolate, and the foam-tipped tops of the ever grateful ice cream soda, all rapidly disappearing under the onslaughts made by many white-tailed and Merry-Widowed damsels, I caught the gleam of an unusually large and clear diamond solitaire. It was worn by a very pretty girl who was waiting for her order to be filled. Her left hand supported her pensive chin, and her eyes gazed dreamily out upon the street.

"It's a beauty," I said, with a little sigh, thinking of the one I had just returned.

"I don't like it," said Peggy, jabbing her spoon viciously into her own particular mound of pink comfort.

"You don't like it?" I asked, surprised, for the ring was magnificent.

"No," said Peggy decidedly, "I don't like it; that is—not any more," and a small smile curled the corner of Peggy's mouth.

"Peggy!" I gasped; "you don't mean to say—"

"Engagement rings," said Peggy reflectively, "should be bought with an eye to a future—misunderstanding, and should never have an odd or unusual setting. That ring has a setting so odd it is almost bizarre. Now can

you understand a sensible and far-seeing man giving a girl an engagement ring like that?"

"I cannot," I said severely, "understand a sensible and far-seeing man giving *you* an engagement ring like that."

"One never knows"—and Peggy shrugged her slender shoulders.

"One never knows what *you* will do—that is quite true—but there *are* girls, Peggy, to whom truth and loyalty"—but Peggy turned a straight little white linen back upon me, and fixed scornful eyes on the other girl.

"Look, doesn't she make a fuss with it! You might know it was her first engagement ring!" and Peggy smiled disdainfully.

"Oh, Peggy, Peggy," I sighed, "you are hopeless! Pray, how many engagement rings have you had?"

Peggy wrinkled her white forehead a moment in thought; then she gave it up. "I never could do figures over ten in my head," and she gave me an impudent little grin.

I am three years Peggy's senior, and there have been times when I have essayed to give her the benefit of my superior age and experience; but after her compulsory plunge into the cold water I keep always on hand for her, she shakes it off as easily as that much quoted and long suffering duck of fame. So now I merely shrugged *my* shoulders, and looked again at the girl with Peggy's ring. Certainly she was displaying it with many unnecessary posturings and gestures, and was it my fancy, or did her eyes turn to Peggy with an amused little gleam in them?

She was a pretty girl, a very pretty girl, and there was something vaguely familiar about her too. Surely I had seen those eyes before somewhere. I knit my brows a moment in thought and then I smiled.

"Jack was quite the nicest man you ever treated badly, Peggy. Why did you let him give that pretty girl your ring?"

"Pretty!" snapped Peggy. "I hope you don't call *her* pretty!"

"She is charming," I said. "Such a lovely color."

"It does look natural, murmured Peggy.

"And such beautiful eyes."

"But so expressionless."

"She has the sweetest mouth."

"Just like a doll's," sniffed Peggy.

"She looks as though if you touched a spring she would squeak, 'Papa' 'Mamma.'"

"Do you think so? I fancy she would be more likely to say 'Jack.'"

Peggy winced.

"She has the most fascinating dimple right in the middle of her chin," I continued cruelly; "just the sort of a dimple I fancy a man would love to kiss."

Peggy turned white.

"Really, Kate, you are unusually silly today, even for you," and Peggy attempted a yawn, but it was not a success.

Just then the pretty girl adjusted her veil, drew on the empty glove dangling at her wrist, and came slowly towards us, still with that amused little smile in her eyes.

"Is she smiling at *me*?" cried Peggy furiously. "Do I amuse her? Does she dare to think—"

"No, no, Peggy," I cried soothingly.

"Does she suppose for one instant her engagement makes the slightest difference to me?" and Peggy's red lips lost their pretty curves and set in a straight line.

"Oh, Peggy, who *could* think such a thing?" I cried mendaciously.

"When I broke that engagement," cried Peggy fiercely, "I did the only sensible thing I ever did in my life."

"Certainly, dear. I quite agree with you."

Peggy turned on me hotly.

"You do? And why, pray? I don't see how you can call yourself a friend of Jack's and then speak of him like that. Sometimes, Kate, I really fear you are not as sincere as you should be."

I smiled. The pretty girl was wedging her way through the crowd towards us.

"I believe she is going to speak to me!" gasped Peggy.

"I believe she is," I said coolly, and again I smiled.

"If she *dare*!" and Peggy's tone was ominous, while her brown eyes flashed.

The pretty girl with the eyes of someone I knew stopped in front of us.

"Is not this Miss Winnington?" she said to Peggy with a very sweet smile.

"It is," admitted Peggy, with a cold stare.

"Jack showed me your picture. I recognized you at once."

Peggy's eyes emitted sparks of fire, and a crimson spot burned in each cheek.

"I hope you don't mind my speaking to you. Jack has talked of you so often to me, I feel as if I knew you quite well. I hope we may be friends."

"You are too kind," murmured Peggy, with dangerous sweetness.

"I don't believe," and the pretty girl laughed, "you have the vaguest idea who I am."

"How clever of you!" said Peggy admiringly.

"Why, I am Jack's sister, his married sister, the one who lives in Detroit, you know. Has he never spoken of me? How mean of him!"

"Oh, are you Mrs. Winthrop?" and Peggy's eyes were radiant. "How delightful! Jack has often spoken of you. I am so glad to have the pleasure of knowing you."

"He is looking wretchedly ill. Poor Jack!" and his sister sighed.

Peggy gazed out of the window.

"The poor boy has not been himself for a long time."

Peggy studied the tip of her tan shoe.

"We are so worried about him. You know he has never been very strong."

Peggy looked up alarmed, while I had a violent attack of coughing. The idea of big Jack Stanford, with his six feet one of superb manhood, never having been very strong was almost too much for me. I caught Mrs. Winthrop's eyes fixed warningly upon me, however, and tried to look properly sympathetic.

"We have finally persuaded the poor fellow to go away," she continued sadly. "We hope an entire change of climate may help him. He leaves tonight for Denver."

Peggy jumped. "Tonight?" she faltered.

Mrs. Winthrop leaned over and whispered something in Peggy's pink ear. Peggy blushed, hesitated a moment, then nodded. Mrs. Winthrop straightened—to my great relief, as one

long blue plume was tickling my left ear—murmured her pleasure at having met Peggy, and with a tiny wink at me and a little flurry of her frilly skirts was gone.

Peggy began drawing on her gloves with feverish haste.

"I am so sorry, dear, but I have just remembered an engagement, a most important engagement," she shamelessly fibbed. "I shall have to go at once."

"Do, Peggy, and don't break it this time," I replied.

Peggy did not even hear me, and in another instant I was watching her little white-clad figure swinging up the street.

I drew a long breath of relief. I could flatter myself that I had helped a little, and Jack was a nice boy and would make her happy.



THE WRECKAGE

By FLORENCE B. DAVIDSON

TWO pieces of human driftwood
 Beached on the sands of sin,
 Four eyes from retrospection
 Grown heavy as hearts within;
 The man lacked honor, ambition,
 The woman needed a friend;
 Neither could pierce the future
 Or cared to think of the end.

The name of their craft was "Passion,"
 But blindly they read it "Love";
 One creeps from the Stygian darkness,
 The other drops, soft, from above.
 They sailed away on their journey,
 Cared not what the world might say,
 And the Lloyds that they keep in Heaven
 Just posted the wreckage today.

Two hearts ashamed and broken,
 Two memories seared with pain;
 Two lives just wantonly wasted
 That can never be lived again.

L'ORDONNANCE SALUTAIRE

Par EMILE HINZELIN

A ZURICH, il y a quelque dix ans, vivait un médecin français, le docteur Jean Lejeune. Aussi timide qu'intelligent, de petite taille, barbe trop rare et front trop haut, Jean Lejeune, soucieux avant tout de beaux livres et de beaux paysages, restait sans grande clientèle. Il trouvait à Zurich de quoi satisfaire ses goûts. C'était un docteur heureux. D'habitude, les docteurs heureux n'ont pas d'histoire. Jean Lejeune faisait exception.

Un jour, arriva chez lui une servante tout effarée, qui cria en mauvais allemand :

— Ma maîtresse a besoin de vous tout de suite.

— Qui est votre maîtresse ?

— Une dame française. Elle habite tout près d'ici.

— En ce cas, je vous suis.

C'est ainsi que le docteur Jean Lejeune vit Mme Marthe Clarent pour la première fois.

Veuve à vingt ans, Mme Marthe Clarent était venue passer à Zurich quelques semaines. Une servante, Marie, brave Tyrolienne qui savait fort mal l'allemand et plus mal encore le français, l'entourait d'un dévouement ingénu et passionné.

Sa beauté singulière était un peu irritante à force de perfection. Quoi qu'on fit, on ne pouvait oublier son profil délicat, sa chair d'une blancheur nacrée, ses magnifiques cheveux d'un blond presque brun, ses grands yeux d'un bleu extrêmement pâle et pur. La bouche se dessinait, étroite et charnue, comme une délicieuse fleur. En sa grâce, il y avait une chaste tristesse. Tristesse de la fragilité!

Impossible de concevoir cette créature hors de la richesse, du luxe, de la paix, de l'amour. Quand elle renversait un peu la tête, son visage exquis semblait s'alanguir, ses yeux dilatés prenaient une douceur tragique.

Timide, elle aussi, mais d'une autre manière, elle vivait dans la peur de l'opinion. L'opinion, c'était pour elle l'énigme toujours menaçante. Il lui semblait que la moindre démarche, le moindre mot, le moindre geste, allait être un signal de calomnies mortelles. La peur de l'opinion est la plus terrible des peurs. Il n'y a pas toujours de l'orage, il n'y a pas toujours des gouffres, il n'y a pas toujours des chiens enragés, il n'y a pas toujours des bœufs, des araignées ni même des souris. Toutes les choses qui sèment l'épouvante ici-bas peuvent être plus ou moins évitées. Il y a toujours autour de nous des hommes, et qui bavardent.

Bientôt, le docteur Lejeune n'exista plus que pour être près de Mme Marthe Clarent. Il savourait religieusement sa présence. Quand il la quittait, il éprouvait la peine de l'exil, de l'agonie du néant. Cet amour avait d'abord été une caresse pour son cœur. Mais bientôt la caresse était devenue une oppression, une angoisse. Hélas! supplice trop cher! Son seul nom était une obsédante douceur. Marthe! Il disait: "Marthe!" Et il jugeait que ce nom était le plus séduisant du monde. Unique, en vérité, puisque celle qui le portait était unique!

Tout cela, il voulait le lui dire, et il ne lui en disait rien. Timide, non moins timide qu'amoureux, il laissait, sans un aveu, passer les jours.

— Quand donc parlerai-je? se disait-il chaque soir. Et il se taisait de plus en plus.

La dernière fois qu'il se posa cette question, il faisait une nocturne promenade dans les rues de Zurich. Nocturne promenade, tout illuminée par la vision de l'amie aux yeux clairs, à la chair nacrée. Soudain, il décida: "Je parlerai demain, si le nombre des becs de gaz placés entre celui que je touche et celui qui termine l'avenue forme un multiple de trois. O amoureux! quel souci vous avez des nombres! La table de Pythagore vous sert à graver vos noms entrelacés et la courtisane de Venise eut grand tort de dire à Rousseau: "Laisse-là les amours et étudie la mathématique!" Ces occupations peuvent aller de pair. Le nombre des becs de gaz fut un multiple de trois.

— Je parlerai demain, murmura docilement le docteur. Mais, que dirai-je?

Pour savoir que dire, il interrogea non plus les nombres, mais son cœur, le ciel, l'infini. Il est possible que l'infini lui répondit, car, après beaucoup d'hésitations, de repentir, d'élancements, il écrivit sur son carnet de consultations les belles et originales lignes que voici:

"Ce que vous allez lire, vous le savez. Vous êtes clairvoyante autant que charmante. Je vous aime. Je ne respire que pour vous répéter ces mots! J'adore la splendeur émouvante de vos yeux, la finesse et la loyauté de vos mains. Je vous aime. Vous devez me comprendre. C'est mon existence que je voue à votre volonté. Votre vie est ma vie. Mon bonheur consistera à faire le vôtre."

Le bon docteur passa une nuit plus tranquille. Le lendemain, il se présenta chez Mme Clarent. Quand il la vit dans son salon, si jolie, si pure, si parfaite, il pensa: "Hélas! cette fois encore, je ne dirai rien." Il ne se rassura que lorsqu'il découvrit que Mme Clarent était un peu souffrante. Son émotion lui permit sans doute de s'exagérer sincèrement le malaise de celle qu'il adorait.

— J'ai eu beaucoup de fièvre, cette nuit, murmura Mme Clarent.

— Voyons! répondit le docteur.

Voir, c'était ausculter. Vertu des nombres, autorité des becs de gaz formant un multiple de trois, conseils impérieux du ciel étoilé et de l'infini, qu'étiez-vous devenus? Le docteur ne songeait plus qu'à rester avec son amie, éternellement silencieusement. Soudain, à travers cette extase, sa conscience se fit entendre: "Tu avais juré de parler, et tu ne sais pas même répéter ce que tu as écrit sur ton cahier de visites..."

En ce moment, Mme Clarent lui demandait:

— Eh bien! docteur, que m'ordonnez-vous?

Trait de feu! Indicible soulagement! Suavité libératrice! Le docteur pouvait donc parler sans parler. Il déchira de son cahier la déclaration écrite dans la nuit. Il y ajouta fébrilement quelques mots: "Vous voulez une ordonnance. Voici une supplication, une ardente supplication. Entendez-la."

De quel air donna-t-il cette ordonnance à sa malade? D'un air timide, assurément. Or, la timidité a toujours l'air doctoral. Mme Clarent frissonna. Elle se savait aimée, mais elle se croyait souffrante. Jamais elle n'aurait pu concevoir que le docteur, le docteur si grave qui l'avait si gravement auscultée au lieu d'une ordonnance, avait écrit une déclaration d'amour. Sans lire (les mots rébarbatifs d'une ordonnance ne peuvent que bouleverser une malade) elle appela sa femme de chambre.

— Tenez, Marie, portez ce papier chez le pharmacien.

Et la femme de chambre porta ce papier chez le pharmacien. Le pharmacien le déplia, le lut, puis, rajustant ses lunettes, le relut, jusqu'au moment où, derrière les lunettes, brilla un éclair d'ironie. Alors, il se leva, appliqua sur le papier le timbre de sa maison; puis, au-dessous, il écrivit lentement: "Prière de revoir cette ordonnance et de la refaire S. A. (*secundum artem*), s'il y a lieu."

Quand Mme Clarent lut ces deux choses—la déclaration du docteur... et

celle du pharmacien — elle devint blanche comme une morte et tomba sur le tapis sans connaissance.

C'est pourquoi la bonne servante alla de nouveau et en toute hâte chercher le docteur. Elle lui dit, tout simplement : "Madame se meurt."

Et vraiment, Madame se mourait. La noble et douce créature avait placé sa vie dans un idéal de calme, d'ordre et de dignité. Le respect qui l'entourait était pour elle l'air respirable. L'air respirable lui manquait.

Accouru éperdument, le docteur vit, dans la main crispée de la pauvre femme, son ordonnance et le timbre

qu'on y avait appliqué. Il eut, lui aussi, un moment de désespoir fou.

Tomber sur le tapis pour faire symétrie? Non, le docteur était un homme. C'était même un homme d'esprit. Il ordonna à la servante d'aller prendre en hâte deux billets de chemin de fer pour Paris, et de tenir une voiture prête devant la porte.

Dès que Mme Marthe Clarent rouvrit les yeux, il lui montra les deux billets de chemin de fer.

— Nous partons tout de suite, dit-il.

— Oui, oui, oui, répondit-elle.

Et ils furent trois et quatre fois heureux pendant tout le reste de leur vie.



BRUNETTE

Par ANDRÉ THEURIET

VOICI qu'avril est de retour,
Mais le soleil n'est plus le même,
Ni le printemps, depuis le jour
Où j'ai perdu celle que j'aime.

Je m'en suis allé par les bois.
La forêt verte était si pleine,
Si pleine des fleurs d'autrefois,
Que j'ai senti grandir ma peine.

J'ai dit aux beaux muguets tremblants:
"N'avez-vous pas vu ma mignonne?"
J'ai dit aux ramiers roucouleurs:
"N'avez-vous rencontré personne?"

Mais les ramiers sont restés sourds,
Et sourde aussi la fleur nouvelle,
Et depuis je cherche toujours
Le chemin qu'a pris l'infidèle.

L'amour, l'amour qu'on aime tant,
Est comme une montagne haute:
On la monte tout en chantant,
On pleure en descendant la côte.

SPRING FEVER AND THE THEATERS

By CHANNING POLLOCK

THE drama is unlike the crocus in nothing more than that it does not flourish in the spring.

A hardy plant, this drama, blooming best when winds are cold and the snow is on the ground. With the first warm breath of the year it droops and withers. The young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love, but turns away from the theater, wearied after months of playgoing, and finding fresh interests in the real world. Lassitude overtakes the managers, who begin to think of the season to come and of pleasant prospects across the seas. Already there is listlessness on the Rialto, and February brought us but two plays in the least worthy of attention. We had only eight new productions in the whole four weeks to be covered in this article.

What is left of the current season threatens to be rather barren. The progress of every amusement term calls to mind that fatalistic nursery jingle about the "ten little niggers standing in a line." Twenty-eight theaters offering new plays; one gets a big success, then there are twenty-seven. Successes aren't so plentiful that we are ever in danger of reaching the final stage of the jingle—"then there were none"—but it sometimes happens that, by the end of winter, only half the first-class houses are open for experiments. At the present moment we have an even dozen attractions reasonably sure to run until hot weather catches them, and so the field is considerably narrowed. These twelve entertainments are "The Easi-

est Way," "What Every Woman Knows," "The Third Degree," "The Fighting Hope," "The Man From Home," "A Gentleman From Mississippi," "The Traveling Salesman," "The Blue Mouse," "Miss Innocence," "Havana," "The Queen of the Moulin Rouge" and the show at the Hippodrome. The dozen may be made a baker's dozen by "The Patriot," or "A Woman's Way," or "The Girl From Rector's."

For the remaining sixteen theaters nothing very important is promised. "The road" holds no performance that has proved a sensation, even in Oil City and Peoria. We seem to be close upon the "silly season," when musical comedy reigns supreme and all the pieces that couldn't get into town, so long as something better offered, blink blandly at Broadway. As I have remarked, even the past few weeks developed symptoms of Spring Fever. We should have had rather a dull time of it but for the recurrence of the dear old reliable row about the "morals of the drama." This row never accomplishes anything particularly notable, but it is amusing while it lasts, and, in these torpid days, anyone who provides us with amusement is likely to be considered a public benefactor.

MANY a disappointed youth has had occasion to reflect sadly upon the impossibility of judging horses by their past performances, but even that kind of prophecy is more dependable than the best "dope" on dramatists. The "ponies" generally run pretty true to

form, but nobody has been able to predict that an author's next play will make a hit because his last one did. In point of fact, it is often more apt to be the other way about.

When Charles Klein, after a struggle extending over a period of twenty years, wrote "The Music Master," and followed it up with "The Lion and the Mouse," he was generally acclaimed the leading light among our manuscript makers. Managers came and sat upon his front doorstep, imploring him to take their money and give them a play. Henry B. Harris and Charles Dillingham were the lucky contestants, and, while their rivals stood by enviously, they produced "The Daughters of Men," which had a short life at the Astor, and "The Step-Sister," which had a shorter life at the Garrick. Mr. Klein was immediately catalogued as the leading light that failed, and when his next work, "The Third Degree," was offered to the impresarios the police reserves were not called out to quell a riot of eager bidders.

Nevertheless, "THE THIRD DEGREE," presented at the Hudson Theater under the direction of Mr. Harris, has won a success only second to that of "The Lion and the Mouse" and promises to roll up a fortune for those chiefly concerned. Mr. Klein has two principles that make him a fairly safe risk. In the first place, he is the star reporter among authors, nursing a fondness for dramatizing the daily newspapers and for selecting themes very much in the public mind. Secondly, he appreciates to the full the human weakness for seeing the worm turn. He has observed that the crowd which watches a big fellow pummel a little one is always delighted when the little fellow slips out of his corner and smashes the big one a wallop between the eyes. Mr. Klein's scheme of play writing is to pummel somebody hard for three acts, and then transform victim into victor in the fourth.

In "The Lion and the Mouse" the big fellow was predatory wealth, and in "THE THIRD DEGREE" it is an insolent and iniquitous police system.

Our opinion of the police varies, as we have need to cross a crowded street or attempt to get inside the lines at a parade, but, most of the time, we are Celticly "agin the Government," and so we rather enjoy finding a precinct captain the villain in "THE THIRD DEGREE." This officer, whose name is Clinton, is brought into the play to investigate the death of Robert Underwood. Underwood is an art dealer, who has got into financial difficulties and who blows out his brains off stage R. as the curtain is parting Act 1 in the middle. Howard Jeffries, Jr., lies in a drunken stupor on a sofa when Underwood performs the operation. He is found there by Captain Clinton, who, when the curtain rises on the next scene, is putting him through the third degree.

This process, as sketched by Mr. Klein, consists of bullying, threatening and wearing down a suspect until his power of resistance is gone, and he is willing to confess anything. Howard, benumbed by liquor and dazed by the circumstances in which he finds himself, has protested his innocence for seven hours, at the end of which time Captain Clinton is still trying to make him admit the police theory of the crime. "The motive is clear!" Clinton thunders. "You shot Robert Underwood—and you shot him with this pistol!" He brings the weapon suddenly into view. "You did it, and you can't deny it! Speak—go on—out with it! You shot Robert Underwood—"

Jeffries, his will paralyzed, his eyes fixed on the glistening steel, gives way at last. "I shot Robert Underwood," he repeats mechanically.

"You quarreled—"

"We quarreled."

"You followed him into that room—"

"Followed him into that room."

"And shot him!"

"And shot him."

"Whew!" exclaims Clinton, heaving a great sigh of relief. "That's all! Gee, he was a tough man!"

Mr. Klein would have us believe that it was hypnosis, induced by the

attraction of a bright object, that compelled his hero to convict himself. Thus, he makes the revolver a little brother of Augustus Thomas's cat's-eye scarf pin in "The Witching Hour," and psychological faddists, who are fast coming to believe that the mind is capable of anything, from amateur telegraphy to assault and battery, doubtless will agree with him. The simple fact is that Jeffries was worn out, stupefied by his long ordeal. However, Mr. Klein and I won't fight about that. His first act is one of the strongest, one of the most grippingly intense pieces of melodrama ever shown in New York.

The sympathetic element enters into the play with the arrival of Mrs. Howard Jeffries, Jr. Mrs. Jeffries is what would commonly be called "a bad lot," not the kind we stone—mostly with stones that cost two hundred dollars each—but an uneducated girl of poor stock, a former waitress, the daughter of a saloon-keeper who died in prison. Howard married her at Yale, whereupon his aristocratic father cut him off, starting him upon that road which only partly makes up in the excellence of its paving what it loses by the climate of its terminal. The old gentleman arrives on the scene now, and steadfastly refuses to assist his wayward son, even though the wife, pleading with all her strength, offers to divorce her husband if Jeffries will come to his aid. Jeffries remaining adamant, with a flintiness hardly human and inhumanly hard, Annie sets herself the task of procuring a great lawyer. "The best lawyer I can get," she tells Clinton, "not one of those court room politicians."

Then begins the girl's struggle to persuade Richard Brewster, a famous counsellor, to take her case. So long as this struggle lasts—the courageous and seemingly hopeless fight of a despairing woman—the drama is intensely vivid and convincing. Brewster represents the elder Jeffries, and so refuses to give Annie an audience until her persistence wearies him into yielding, and, in a conversation possessing

unusual elements of suspense, she obtains the attorney's promise to help Howard. The close of the second act finds Brewster making out the necessary papers, and taking very human satisfaction in contemplating his own willingness to sacrifice his interests for a principle. "Who's afraid now?" he inquires of Annie, as the curtain shuts them from view.

Alas, once the wretched wife has won her fight, and Howard's release seems reasonably certain, the tension of the play begins to relax. The last two acts of "THE THIRD DEGREE" must be regarded as a sort of dramatic postscript, theatrical rather than realistic, depending upon expedient rather than upon logical outcome. Howard's stepmother is in possession of a letter in which Underwood has declared his intention of committing suicide. Immediately after receiving this letter she has visited him in his rooms, and the police have been searching for "the woman in the case." Mrs. Jeffries volunteers to show the letter at the risk of her reputation, and thus to clear her stepson. The envelope is addressed to "Mrs. Howard Jeffries"—without the addition of "Sr." or "Jr." Annie, who, until a few hours before has had only the shabbiest treatment from her mother-in-law, now jumps into the ring with the proposal of a perfectly asinine sacrifice. She will say the letter was written to her—that she was the woman who visited Underwood. And she does.

Of course, at that very spot the story runs off the main line onto a switch. The audience stops sniffing and begins to sniff. Nobody cares an inch of ground in the Sahara what becomes of Mrs. Howard Jeffries, Sr., and the device is so obviously playhouse artifice that Mr. Klein doesn't quite atone for it by a fourth act containing many deft touches and much charming sentiment. This act shows Howard in a "Paid in Full" flat in Harlem, where Annie declares herself willing to be divorced if her loss will be his gain. Her little womanish chat with him, in which she confesses, with deep shame, that she

deceived him about her age, is tremendously tender and true. In the end, enter a good angel, alias Richard Brewster, who gives the boy an opportunity to study law in his office, and we are gratified at leaving the plucky young wife secure of husband, home and happiness.

Whatever defects exist in the play, no one is likely to be the least bit bored by "THE THIRD DEGREE." The interest of its first two acts is unconquerable, and the weak places that come later are supported by the wonderful acting of Helen Ware in the role of Annie Jeffries. Miss Ware's performance furnished the same sort of histrionic sensation for the end of this season that was provided for the end of last by Otis Skinner's Colonel Brideau in "The Honor of the Family." It is an amazing fact that few of the critics who sat up and took notice when they saw Miss Ware remembered that she had compelled them to take notice a dozen times before. "This portrayal," said Louis De Foe in the *World*, "realizes her promise in 'The Regeneration,' and foretells for her a brilliant future." As a matter of fact, that future is now more than one-third a brilliant past. No one who saw them should forget easily her characterizations in "Soldiers of Fortune," "In the Bishop's Carriage," "The Kreutzer Sonata," "The Shirkers" and "The Road to Yesterday." Miss Ware is an actress, not a personality on parade, and there are few women stars in the country who have demonstrated their fitness as unmistakably as she.

Edmund Breese, as Brewster, is becomingly dignified and authoritative, while Wallace Eddinger, who used to be a boy actor, presents the several phases of Howard's nature truthfully and sympathetically. Alan Dale, writing of that character in "The Prince Chap" which was assumed by three girls of different ages, spoke of Claudia as "two children who grew up to be a very bad actress." Mr. Eddinger, as he proved last year in "Classmates," has grown up to be a very good actor. Ralph Delmore,

Francis Byrne and Grace Filkins are the most satisfactory people in the remaining cast.

The third degree, longitudinally speaking, runs through Madrid; "THE THIRD DEGREE," dramatically speaking, is likely to be located for a very long time in New York.

It isn't more than eight or nine years ago that, traveling as advance representative of Grace George, I strode into the lobby of the Valentine Theater, in Toledo. I was very new to "the business," very proud of my star and rather inclined to stride. "Good morning," I said pompously to the young man in the box office. "I'm 'ahead' of Grace George."

"Who's she?" inquired that official imperturbably.

"She's an actress," I replied, with hauteur, "and she appears in this theater a week from Monday."

Subsequently, the young man apologized to me. "I don't want to hurt your feelings," he said, "but, honestly, I didn't know whether Grace George was a woman or a play by Clyde Fitch."

Those were the days when everybody was smiling at William A. Brady and his dogged faith in the ability of his pretty young wife. Mr. Brady stuck with the tenacity of Artemus Ward's postage stamp, holding his faith through a long line of losing investments, beginning with "The Countess Chiffon" and ending with "Pretty Peggy." You may lead a star to the footlights, but you can't make her shine—or, at least, very few managers can. Miss George is the exception. At the present moment she is established as the foremost comedienne of America.

"Divorçons" afforded Miss George her first great opportunity, and so it is not surprising that her next vehicle, now being presented at the Hackett Theater, should be really the reverse English of that ingenious comedy. The piece is called "A WOMAN'S WAY," and Thompson Buchanan, who wrote it, has succeeded in taking his sug-

gestion from Sardou without ever carbon-copying the master Frenchman. In other words, he has built new houses out of old bricks, constructing a smooth running farce that, while it contains nothing quite original, is uniformly fresh, spontaneous and amusing. A better light entertainment it would be hard to find in New York.

A woman's way, according to Mr. Buchanan, is far from being the easiest way. Marion Stanton's husband, Howard, has been straying a bit in forbidden pastures, and finally an automobile breakdown convicts him of more or less intimacy with "a Southern widow," named Elizabeth Blakemore. The automobile is fast winning respect as the most skillful detective of modern times. When clandestine affairs are to be disclosed it has Sherlock Holmes lashed to the mast. The newspaper reporters conclude that the telltale touring car will bring about the divorce of the Stantons. Not so Mrs. Stanton. "We fight to win our husbands," she says; "why not fight to hold them? If this woman gets my husband she'll earn him." She has a straight-from-the-shoulder parley with Howard, in the course of which she asks him whether he loves Mrs. Blakemore. "You've been frank," he declares. "I'll be as frank as I can be. I'm damned if I know." Marion feels this to be a certificate of reasonable doubt, and she begins the battle by asking her rival to dinner.

What follows is irresistibly and infectiously droll. Mrs. Stanton not only asks Mrs. Blakemore to dinner, but she asks half a dozen of the young men who have been implicated with her in the past. "This is such a small dinner," she tells Elizabeth. "I could hardly hope to have *all* your old friends." The exhibit, however, is sufficiently eloquent. Howard Stanton, first thrown into confusion by being caught fairly between the opposing forces, ceases to be an ally of the enemy as soon as he finds his wife indulging in a trumped up flirtation with a former suitor named

Oliver Whitney. When he learns that nearly every man at his table has been an accepted admirer of his affinity's Mrs. Blakemore is routed, foot, horse and dragoons. All this is not accomplished without the introduction of several perfectly delicious situations—the party, with its agonizing restraint, the calls of a persistent newspaper reporter, whose cleverness traps his victims in a series of audacious lies, and the discovery that the entire male portion of the cast has known Mrs. Blakemore as "Puss."

"A WOMAN'S WAY" is not only a most diverting little comedy, but I can recommend it as a salutary lesson to flirtatious husbands and to wives who feel no need of exerting themselves further, once they have "caught the car."

Miss George's sparkling performance, with its sweet blend of tenderness, has already been praised. Frank Worthing, as Howard Stanton, renders her capital assistance. Mr. Worthing is often as unintelligible as a comic opera chorus, but he has a wonderful way of sticking in his thumb and pulling out the plum hidden in every witty line. His discomfiture as he stands between wife and inamorata is sidesplitting. Robert Warwick, a mostactory actor, is imposing as Oliver Whitney, and Dorothy Tennant makes one believe the humorist who said that "a little widow is a dangerous thing." Edward Fielding's newspaper reporter is the real article. The rest of the company calls for no particular comment. It is especially unsuccessful in conveying the impression of manner and breeding. Stage "society" generally suggests a soirée of the Salesgirls' Relief Association, and that at the Hackett is no exception to the rule.

WHEN the late Mr. Omar Khayyam spoke of "old barren Reason" he must have had a prophetic sense of "THE GODDESS OF REASON," a drama in very blank verse written by Mary Johnson, author of "Audrey," for Julia Marlowe. Certainly Miss Johnson

could have chosen no more barren subject than the French Revolution, the horrors of which have been utilized by ten thousand and nine dramatists since the first adaptation of "A Tale of Two Cities." "THE GODDESS OF REASON," now current at Daly's Theater, not only deals with stale episodes—aristocrats courageously waiting for death, crazy mobs singing the "Marseillaise" and dancing the "Carmagnole," knitting women alternately plying their needles and shrieking for someone's death—but it is turgid, illogical and completely artificial—a painted play upon a painted curtain.

"The Girl From Rector's," next door, reminds one, however, that we should be grateful for small favors, such as cleanness, sincerity and high intent, and Julia Marlowe is far from being a small favor. Without her, "THE GODDESS OF REASON" would be a thing sad to contemplate; with her, it is a thorny stem to be tolerated for the sake of its flower. I think nobody will disagree with me if I say that Miss Marlowe is the finest romantic actress on the English speaking stage. (Personally, I never knew a stage to speak English, or anything else, but the phrase is common.) The perfection of her voice and elocution, the confidence of her self-control, the subtle fascination of her manner—these make her art a compelling quality and her performance a long delight. In her survives all that is best in a school fast disappearing; she is the key to understanding of histrionism that was dignified and intellectual. Miss Marlowe appears in this play as Yvette, a creature glowing with love, then maddened by jealousy, then broken by remorse, then crushed by wretchedness, finally exalted in the sublimation of atonement. No one capable of appreciating good acting should fail to see Miss Marlowe.

The story of the play is inconsequential. It concerns a young girl, daughter of a nobleman and a peasant woman, who conceives a passion for René de Vardes, Baron de Morbec. The Revolution makes her a power in the land,

and she first saves the Baron from a mob, and then, frenzied by the belief that he loves another, delivers him to the "justice" of the Republic. Later on, assured of his devotion to her, she brings about her own condemnation and, tied to De Vardes, is thrown into the river Loire. The method of narration makes the piece frank melodrama, and Miss Johnson's verse shows her to be more ignorant of meter than a gas inspector.

WHETHER or not you will be interested by Avery Hopwood's "THIS WOMAN AND THIS MAN," which serves as a vehicle for Carlotta Nillson at Maxine Elliott's Theater, depends largely upon yourself. The piece is unusual in every sense, and if you believe entertainment to be something at which one laughs and drama something made up of extravagant behavior, you will be bored by "THIS WOMAN AND THIS MAN." Mr. Hopwood has taken the simplest sort of a story, and has told it without decorations of any sort. I doubt if a slice of commonplace life was ever before put on the stage so wholly without theatrical ornamentation. The result, from a technical viewpoint, amounts to the founding of a new school; from the viewpoint of the thoughtful playgoer, it is a quiet comedy that holds the attention un-failingly.

Thekla Müller is a governess who falls in love with the nephew of her employer, a worldly young man, named Norris Townsend. When the narration begins Thekla is about to become the mother of this young man's child. Norris learns the truth, but, though she demands it for the sake of "my baby," he declines to marry her. The "wronged girl" in the old-fashioned play would have donned a black dress and moped dismally through four acts. Not so Thekla. She locks the door, takes a revolver from its hiding place and tells Norris that he shall marry her or that neither of them shall leave the room alive. The second act shows Thekla supporting her boy, now five years old, by teaching school in a small

town in upper New York. Townsend searches her out, and, drawn to the little lad, David, declares that he must have the custody of their child. Sooner than submit to this, Thekla goes home with her husband, and there mutual love for David brings about their union.

There is nothing glaringly original nor thrillingly dramatic in the piece, but it moves smoothly in the even tenor of an interesting way, and contains much that is sweet, unaffected and human. Miss Nillson's Thekla shows a notable decline from the art of her Letty, her Mrs. Elvsted and her Rhy MacChesney. Her mannerisms stick out more than they used to do, and her whole performance is sadly under-keyed. There are only five other parts in the cast, and they are all well acted.

I doubt seriously that "THIS WOMAN AND THIS MAN" will ever earn much money. Mr. Hopwood made one sad mistake before writing it. He was not born in Germany or Norway.

At the conclusion of the first act of "THE GIRL FROM RECTOR'S," at Weber's Theater, a pasty-faced young man seated on my right turned to me and said: "That's kind o' Frenchy, ain't it?"

"No," I replied gravely; "it ain't."

I spoke with assurance, for I had seen—and enjoyed—"Loue," the original of "THE GIRL FROM RECTOR'S," in Paris. There I thought it frothy and funny and rather amiably naughty; here it seemed to me stupid, tiresome and deliberately offensive. The whole presentation, with its striving after vulgarity as its one possible excuse for existence, struck me as being not one whit less objectionable than the eager salaciousness of that audience attracted by the advertising slogan: "A spicy salad with very little dressing." We are so sincere in our wickedness this side of the pond, and so terribly aware of it when we are wicked.

The very setting on which the curtain rises at Weber's is meant to start us off in the confidence that we are going to be devilish. We see the apartment of Richard O'Shaughnessy, hung with

pictures of Maude Odell, Anna Held, Gertrude Hoffman, the Fencing Girl and the Apache Dance. Richard has a love affair with Loue Sedaine—please think the worst—and he has secretly arranged to espouse Marcia Singleton. Journeying to Battle Creek for the ceremony, he finds Loue ensconced in the home of the Singletons, to whom she is closely related. "The Girl From Rector's" in New York, in Grand Rapids she is the staid wife of Judge Caperton. What humor the farce contains is derived from this unsavory circumstance, and from the fact that Richard is half married to Marcia when his crimson past is discovered.

"THE GIRL FROM RECTOR'S," adapted by Paul Potter, is one of the plays "the Potter marred in making." The English version has been arranged most clumsily—so clumsily that we find civil marriage, void without a religious ceremony, exploited as a feature of life in Michigan! The whole piece is a mixture of Paris and Battle Creek, utterly without logic or verisimilitude. We are asked to believe that Battle Creek society wears the most daring of Directoire gowns, and includes Admirals, Generals, Colonels and Judges enough to stock Kentucky. We are introduced to a German waiter who speaks wonderful French, to a Cockney uncle of a native New Yorker, and to incidental music culled from the repertoire of Harry Lauder. The whole performance creates the impression of carelessness and slovenliness; that the management believed it needed nothing beyond a reputation for lewdity to attract overflowing audiences.

P. S. The management was right.

GIVEN a gorgeous idea, like the marriage of a peer to a music hall singer, who finds that all the servants in her husband's home are her own relatives, even the average author should be able to turn out something truly delightful in the way of comedy. Jerome K. Jerome, who captioned this story "THE NEW LADY BANTOCK," failed to get an inch from his starting point, providing no development of his theme

and no unexpected offshoot, so that the play, presented by Fannie Ward at Wallack's, never fulfilled its promise. At the end of the first act the audience knew everything it was destined to learn.

The surprise of the engagement was the admirable work of Fannie Ward as Lady Bantock. A few years ago Miss Ward was known to us chiefly as an uncommonly pretty girl, seated in a photograph upon a stone wall and engaged in plucking a butterfly from her left elbow. In Mr. Jerome's little play she gave evidences of unusual ability and of great personal charm. Miss Ward's future is money in the bank.

ONCE I remarked to *The Lady Who Goes to the Theater With Me* that if everyone wore tights there would be no musical comedy.

"HAVANA," however, is a piece which does not depend upon undrapery for its appeal to audiences. This piece, which was written, revised, adapted, staged and supplied with lyrics by a whole telephone book full of people, was brought from the London Gaiety and is presented by James T. Powers, the crushed comedian, at the Casino. "HAVANA" has a real story, with six or eight real, and excruciatingly funny, situations, besides scores of bright lines and some whistleable music. All in all, it is as enjoyable an entertainment as you could choose as a weapon to kill time.

Samuel Nix, described as "a matrimonial outlaw and bo'sun of the *Wasp*," in the course of a previous stop in Cuba has been hymeneally tied to a girl named Anita. He was under the influence of liquor at the time, and was hurried away without having recovered sufficiently to remember the appearance of his bride. The incidents of his return, with no means of identifying the lady save a lock of hair which he has worn in his bosom so long that he fears to remove it lest he catch cold, form the plot of "HAVANA." Many of these incidents are hilariously comic. Nix, for example, discovers that it is the custom of the country to present a

visitor with any article he admires. Immediately, he grows so lavish in praise of the attire worn by a courteous native that the young fellow is in danger of becoming a Salome.

Leslie Stuart is to be commended for having furnished a score that never even suggests his "Florodora." Its most charming melody is the interlude in a comic song, called "How Did the Bird Know That?" You will also like "Cupid's Telephone," "On the Shores of Sheephead Bay," "My Husband" and "Way Down in Pensacola," which introduces a particularly attractive young woman named Edith Kelly. The big hit of the offering, however, is a refrain, known as "Hello, People; People, Hello," which eight girls sing repeatedly straight at the audience. This novelty alone would make the success of a much less entertaining play than "Havana."

"THE FAIR CO-ED" is the latest musical comedy to be written around the imitations of Elsie Janis. It is a long way around these imitations, for there are a good many of them—mostly familiar to theatergoers since Miss Janis was "Little Elsie" in vaudeville. George Ade wrote "THE FAIR CO-ED," and it proves to be an occasionally amusing admixture of "The College Widow" and "Charley's Aunt." The scenes are all laid at "Bingham University," and such pleasure as one derives from the performance comes from the youth and exuberance of the young people employed in telling the story.

Miss Janis herself is hardly of stellar caliber. The entertainment, as a whole, is attractive only in spots, notably when the chorus is singing a medley of old college airs or exhibiting the ingenious "business" of a good football number. Mr. Ade's wit seems to have been dragged into the play by its boots, and the best possible comment upon Gustav Luders's music is that the audience, having heard Miss Janis's imitation of Bessie McCoy, comes out of the Knickerbocker Theater whistling "Yama."

AFTERWARDS

By REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN

SOMEHOW it is the little things that last
And make the picture when the model's fled—
Her smile, her voice, the way she tossed her head,
Coquetting; when the memory is past
Of line and feature, then such trifles set
Their fingers to the brushes.

Henriette

Was just that sort: illusive, here and there.
I knew her quite ten winters—loved her one—
And yet, no sooner was the story done
Than I could scarce have told you if her hair
Was black or golden. (There, I sometimes think,
Lay half her charm: a man could look and drink
Great draughts of all her prettiness, and then
Go, and forget, and long to drink again!)
Well, so tonight, five years since when we said
Good-bye, without a heartbreak, were I sent
Da Vinci's art to fetch that lineament
Most fleeting and distinctive back to me,
And paint on some spick canvas her dim head,
So all the world would straight acclaim it she,
Even so, my hand would fail me utterly.

And yet I know her still: her laugh and frown,
The sweep of shoulder and the fall of gown;
And how, at moments, her unwavering eyes,
That were so innocent, could seem so wise;
A dimple darting like a butterfly
About the flowers in the pink and white
Glad garden of her cheek: the leaping light
Lost in the tides between a smile and sigh;
The perfume of her hair, and how the rose
She wore once at her throat assumed new grace,
And that shy sadness her unconscious face
Wore in its moments of untaught repose.

And that is all? It should be all, and yet
This last remains: that I recall that I
Have wooed so often her faint memory,
While she was ever ready to forget!

THE NOVELS THAT BLOOM IN THE SPRING, TRA-LA!

By H. L. MENCKEN

IT is highly improbable that any of the novels of the present spring will go thundering down the dim corridors of time as immortal masterpieces, but, all the same, there are several in the first crop that will yield you a very fair profit upon the toil of reading them. When I say several I mean three, and when I say three I mean "SEPTIMUS," "TONO-BUNGAY" and "THE ETERNAL BOY." The first is by W. J. Locke, an Englishman; the second is by H. G. Wells, a good European, and the third is by Owen Johnson, an American.

If you have time, read all three of them—read them, chuckle over them and remember me in your prayers for having recommended them. They are from the pens of men who have something to say and know how to say it; they are full of humor, fancy, insight and imagination: they are arresting, workmanlike, artistic, different. If, unluckily for you, you are sorely indigent in leisure and must sacrifice one of the three, let that one be "SEPTIMUS." And if—ah, woe!—you must sacrifice two, let the other be "THE ETERNAL BOY." But "TONO-BUNGAY" you must not miss. It is a story of a rare and delectable sort—a story with a beginning, a middle and an end, and a philosophy underneath. Beside the common run of best sellers it looms up like a Matterhorn.

"TONO-BUNGAY" (*Duffield, \$1.50*) tells of one Ponderevo, a patent medicine king, and we see him go up the ladder and then come sliding down. At the start he is a small fry druggist in a little English country town—a drug-gist whose business barely gets him a

living, but whose dreams are of gigantic wealth and kingly power. He invents hair oils, massage machines, headache powders, bust developers and shaving soaps—and then, in the end, after drawing many blanks, he invents Tono-Bungay. Ostensibly a sort of universal panacea for all human ills, this Tono-Bungay is really not a medicine at all, but a system of advertising. Into each bottle goes a fraction of a grain of strychnine and half a pint of water—a combination whose effect upon the human viscera, if it has any effect whatever, is almost certain to be baleful. But into his advertisements old Ponderevo puts something genuine, potent, rare and electrical, and that something is genius.

So Tono-Bungay becomes a colossal success, and as it grows and grows Ponderevo's dreams grow with it. The acknowledged monarch of the wholesale poisoning trade, he yearns for new worlds to conquer. He gobbles the soap industry, the coal scuttle industry, the flatiron industry and a hundred other industries. He aspires to control the production of all the necessities of life, and the spellbound British public, enchanted by his magnificence, pours its savings into his securities. But that sort of thing, of course, can't go on forever. There must come inevitably a day of doubt, followed by a day of worse doubt, and . . .

Well, the expected happens, and the mills of the gods grind Ponderevo. One evening he escapes from England in an airship, to find himself, next day, in a remote Spanish hamlet. And there, after a while, he dies miserably.

bankrupt and a fugitive from justice. It is the finish of Tono-Bungay.

So much for the actual story. It is a story full of incident and action, and it is told with constant resourcefulness and skill. There are pages that show the insight of George Moore, and other pages that show the comic sense of Kipling. But more important than the story itself is the criticism of British civilization that Mr. Wells formulates in telling it. Here we have the estimates and objections of a man who has thought things out for himself, and whose conclusions, however much you may dissent from them, must at least convince you of their honesty and ingenuity. In a word, the principal character in this book is not Ponderevo, nor even that marvelous nephew of his who tells the story, but John Bull himself. We are made privy to John's secret meditations; we come to understand his prejudices, follies and superstitions. He ceases to be a mere Merry Andrew of the cartoonists, and becomes, at a stroke, almost as human as Ponderevo himself. And so "TONO-BUNGAY" is not a common romance for the hammock and the parlor car, but a Book.

"SEPTIMUS" (*Lane*, \$1.50) is a tale of far thinner blood, but Mr. Locke's technique is so marvelous that it becomes almost as interesting. I wonder what this entertaining Englishman would make of a story as full of truth and human passion as that of "Anna Karenina"—or that of "Sapho"! And what would he make of a Becky Sharp, an Etienne Lantier or a Jean Valjean? As it is, Mr. Locke seems to avoid all such poignant plots and personages. He is content to skim the surface—to look upon life as an engrossing but incredible game, in which the straight flushes outnumber the melancholy two-spots. He has Barrie's fancy without Barrie's shrewd philosophy, and Gilbert's extravagant humor without Gilbert's weakness for a moral at the final curtain.

It is a whimsical world that Mr. Locke inhabits, and the folks that he meets there are entirely impossible.

But how delightful the one and how charming the other! As in "Tono-Bungay," there is a patent medicine man in "SEPTIMUS," but the two have nothing whatever in common. Ponderevo is not only a magnificent rascal, but also a great actor, and until the end we are unable to decide whether he believes in Tono-Bungay himself or not. This Lockean nostrum seller is less complex and less veritable. He is his own most enthusiastic follower and victim, and more than once he leaves the real world altogether and moves about for a while in the realm of comic opera.

Septimus himself is frankly from fairyland. He is a gnome in a frock coat—a Liberal elf with a patriotic British respect for brandy and soda, the high silk hat and the Church of England. A true humanitarian and eager for the affection of his fellow creatures, he devotes his leisure to the design of large caliber ordnance. In love with one woman, and yearning for a chance to let her know it, he suddenly marries another—because that other stands in greater need of a husband. He is a bundle of impossibilities, of genial absurdities, of lovable extravagances. If you live a thousand years you will never meet him, but as you read about him in Mr. Locke's delightful book you will come to regard him as an old and very dear friend.

"THE ETERNAL BOY" (*Dodd-Mead*, \$1.50) is the best book about boys that I have ever read, saving only "Huckleberry Finn." Here is a writer who knows the young male of the human species as thoroughly as a Maryland blackamoor knows the roosting customs of the domestic fowl—knows him from his frowzy head to his stubbed toe, from his felonious mind to his insatiable stomach, from his loose incisor to the scab on his shin. Here we have a whole gallery—a principality, a cosmos—of boys, and every last one of them is alive, human and irresistible.

Mr. Johnson's youngsters are young gentlemen pursuing their studies at Lawrenceville Academy, but they really belong to all boydom. One be-

gins by laughing at them and ends by laughing with them. They are universal types. Their torts and misdemeanors are the torts and misdemeanors of all boys at all times and everywhere. They go straight to your heart, and you cherish them there and go back with them, for a sentimental hour or so, to the glad days when you were a boy yourself—when you were one of *these* boys. You will never quite forget the Prodigious Hickey, and neither will you forget Doc Macnooder, the Human Catapult, Hungry Smeed and the Triumphant Egghead. They are old friends come back to give you all the news of boyland.

The book is written, not for boys, but for men who were boys the other day. It has an abounding humor that "Tom Brown at Rugby" lacks, and it has insight that "Stalky & Co." never shows, even in traces. As I have said, I know of but one book in the English language that meets it upon its own ground and dims its charm, and that book is "Huckleberry Finn." But this comparison is unjust, for merely human heroes cannot hope to rival the gods.

And now let us jump from Paradise to Gehenna, which is to say, from the three excellent books we have been discussing to the Rev. Thomas Dixon's "COMRADES" (*Doubleday-Page*, \$1.50). The first few chapters of this intolerably amateurish and stupid quasi-novel well-nigh staggered me, and it was only by tremendous effort that I got through them at all. After that, I must confess, the task became less onerous, and toward the end the very badness of the book began to exercise a nefarious fascination. I was exploring new worlds of banality, of vapidness, of melodrama, of tortured wit. I felt the thrill of the astronomer with his eye glued upon some new and inconceivable star—of the pathologist face to face with some novel and horrible *coccus*. So I now look back upon my two hours with "COMRADES," not with a shudder, but with a glow. It will lie embalmed in my memory as a

composition unearthly and unique—as a novel without a single redeeming merit. It shows every weakness, fault, misdemeanor known to prose fiction; from incredible characterization to careless proofreading, and from preposterous dialogue to trashy illustrations.

No, I am not going to tell you the plot. Buy the book and read it yourself. The way to happiness lies through suffering.

The next worst book on my shelf is "THE RED MOUSE," by William Hamilton Osborne (*Dodd-Mead*, \$1.50). Here we have the tale of a district attorney who, on being tempted by a bribe of \$100,000, demands eight times as much—and gets it. For this princely honorarium he promises to achieve the liberation of a gentleman unjustly accused of homicide. He delivers the goods—and then returns the money!

On its face, you will observe, this story is not entirely absurd, and in the hands of a first class—or even twentieth or two hundredth class—romancer it might conceivably kill time between trains very acceptably. But as Mr. Osborne has written it, it reeks of the clumsy and impossible amateur. The characters are wooden dummies and they speak in story book style throughout. Not once do they appeal to you as human beings; not once do you find yourself sorry for them in their sorrows or glad with them in their joys. The plot is an amplified anecdote. The whole story might be better told in a thousand words. Altogether, it's a sorry performance.

A book not far from the opposite pole is "THE KISS OF HELEN," by Charles Marriott (*Lane*, \$1.50). It is an interesting story well told, and it reveals a decidedly individual talent—a talent, one feels, that has yet to find complete utterance. Its appeal, perhaps, is not very wide, and so it cannot be bracketed with the three books I have discussed at the beginning of this article, but it certainly belongs to the truly

significant and original fiction of the spring. Mr. Marriott seems to be writing, not because the manufacture of novels is a gentlemanly and profitable diversion, but because he has something to say.

The story is a study of mental states rather than of muscular functioning, and in consequence it ill bears summarizing. The idea at the bottom of it—and, strangely enough, a good novel commonly has an idea at the bottom of it—is a sort of denial of the ancient Anglo-Saxon assumption that love and the impulse to marry are synchronous and identical. If we deny this assumption we destroy the essential premise in nine-tenths of all English and American works of the imagination. Nevertheless, Mr. Marriott denies it, and in its place he puts the counter notion that, among human beings of a certain complexity, marriage may appear, not as the inevitable and delectable crown and climax of love, but as its skeleton-at-the-feast and Blue Monday. The thought is not new, no doubt, but never has it been discussed with more insight and understanding. An interesting book, and for all its faults of technique, one well worth reading.

"THE EXPLORER," by W. Somerset Maugham (*Baker-Taylor*, \$1.50), has a heroine whose woes keep her in tears from cover to cover. Her father begins things by losing their ancestral home in the stock market. Then he is arrested for fraud, tried, convicted and jailed. Then he gets out and proceeds to die, lingeringly and horribly, at the poor girl's expense. But wait! The worst is yet to come!

The girl has a lover—the calm, brave, wealthy Explorer pictured on page 170. He takes her young brother out to Africa to make a man of him, but the brother soon goes wrong, and the Explorer, who is judge and hangman out there, condemns him to lead a forlorn hope against a war party of savages. He never comes back.

Robbed thus of father and brother, the poor girl lives only for her exploratory lover. And even he is now lost to

her, for his enemies, on his return, say that he deliberately contrived the murder of his prospective brother-in-law. He is too austere and dignified to call them liars and so the heroine suffers agonies. Can she marry the murderer of her brother? No! But can she help loving him? Again, no!

Tortured unto death, she receives word that her Explorer is going back to Africa to face almost certain assassination. And then, casting maiden modesty to the winds, she tackles him with her tears, and he—well, it would not be quite accurate to say that he melts, for it is inconceivable that such an arctic and magnificent hero should ever melt, but he does grow somewhat humane, if not human. That is to say, he gives her his word that her brother deserved to die; and furthermore, he gives her his word that he will not submit tamely to assassination. The chances are, he says, that he will come back—at the end of three years or so . . . The poor girl, unaccustomed to such avalanches of joy, almost collapses.

As will be observed, Mr. Maugham's story is scarcely to be taken seriously as a chronicle of human events, but all the same, it has a certain interest and vivacity. A humorous sub-plot gives him an opportunity to write the witty dialogue for which he is famous. Such dialogue is never spoken by human beings, but it makes passable reading, none the less.

In "THE MAGICIAN," also by Mr. Maugham (*Duffield*, \$1.50), there are staggering thrills. The book, indeed, is frankly designed to scare you to death, and it almost accomplishes its object. Its villain-hero is an Englishman, who masters the magic of the ancients, and erects a laboratory for the artificial manufacture of girls and boys. Incidentally, he carries off a beautiful heroine—who really loves another fellow, poor maid!—and introduces her to such unspeakable horrors that she soon expires. "THE MAGICIAN," I am sorry to say, has little more literary grace than a college yell, but such as it is, it will certainly keep you awake.

Emerson Hough's "54-40 OR FIGHT" (*Bobbs-Merrill*, \$1.50) is somewhat elaborately dedicated to Mr. Roosevelt, and I have no doubt that its mixture of patriotism and romance will vastly delight that gentleman. More critical readers, however, will probably reach the lamentable conclusion that Mr. Hough's story is a poor one, and that he tells it badly.

One of the chief figures is John Calhoun, and the intrigue concerns itself with the acquisition of Texas and the Northwest Territory. Both England and the United States want these dominions, and the battle for them is being waged at Washington. England seems to be winning, when suddenly one of her agents—a mysterious Baroness von Ritz—falls in love with Calhoun's fair young secretary. To serve him, she becomes the mistress of the British Ambassador, who so far yields to her charms that he signs a waiver of the British claims. This document she hands to the man she loves—and then blesses his union with a beautiful young American. Toward the end she tells the story of her life.

Here and there, particularly in his descriptions of the march of empire westward, Mr. Hough writes with skill and good sense, but in his sentimental passages he grows conventional and maudlin. His characters lack rotundity, reality, humanity. Somehow, indeed, they smell of the storehouse, and engender the idea that the author in his day has read many bad novels—read them and, what is worse, enjoyed them.

"THE FASHIONABLE ADVENTURES OF JOSHUA CRAIG," by David Graham Phillips (*Appleton*, \$1.50), is a good story spoiled in the telling. The pushing, egomaniac and ruthless hero who comes out of the West and forces both the President of the United States and the social Czarina of Washington to eat from his hand, and the weak, fashionable heroine who yields to him—these are interesting and novel personages, and their story is worth hearing. But Mr. Phillips mixes it with so much of his own rubbishy philosophy that it

often lumbers. Some day, let us hope, he will outgrow this philosophy and cease to dwell upon the Crimes of the Affluent. When he does he will begin to write very good novels.

"THE CLIMBER," by E. F. Benson (*Doubleday-Page*, \$1.50), is a story of the "Dodo" school. That is to say, the scenes are laid in exceedingly fashionable circles, and the final note is one of despair. In striking this note Mr. Benson borrows a device from the masters of music. You remember, I suppose, that harrowing crash at the end of "Madame Butterfly"—that shrill triad on the sixth of B minor, with its assertion of the unbearable and irremediable? Well, Mr. Benson devises a verbal sixth of B minor for the end of his last chapter: "These were they; moth-eaten now, moldy." *These were they!* Don't you feel the harshness, the cruelty, the brutality of it? Don't you hear the whole of that ghastly sentence ringing in your ears?

Certainly such bold borrowings from the chamber of horrors of a sister art show ingenuity—and there is plenty more of it in "The Climber." The story is not pleasant, and it is difficult to summon up sympathy for any of the principal characters, but, all the same, it is well planned and, in more than one place, well written.

"THE THREE BROTHERS," by Eden Phillpotts (*Macmillan*, \$1.50), is the workmanlike novel of an accomplished workman, but I cannot imagine an American growing interested in it. It deals with certain exceedingly elemental folks of Mr. Phillpotts's beloved Dartmoor, and at times one can scarcely see the story for the local color. It is, I have no doubt, a keen and accurate study of Dartmoor psychology, but Dartmoor psychology, like Lithuanian philology, is a subject in which few of us have a very feverish interest. The characters approach the universal types but rarely, and when they do they are not usually likable. To connoisseurs of workmanship, of course, Mr. Phillpotts is never without his moments.

"MAURICE GUEST," by H. H. Richardson (*Duffield*, \$1.50), is a story of student life in Leipsic, and its hero is a young Englishman who mixes the investigation of dissonances and the practice of scales with the dangerous art of wooing. In the end he goes into a public park at sunrise, places a revolver to his bare chest and shoots himself through the lungs—a vulgar and even indecent performance. It is a somber and somewhat dull story, with occasional flashes of good writing. Much of its dullness, no doubt, is due to its intolerable length. In all, there are 562 pages of small type—enough matter for a three volume novel or a Sunday newspaper.

In "DREAMING RIVER," by Barr Moses (*Stokes*, \$1.50), there are but two

characters of consequence. One of them is a rugged poet (hero) and the other is his fair young third cousin (heroine). The hero makes love to the heroine by forcing her to listen to his unpublished strophes. A good part of the book, in fact, is made up of quotations from his unpublished works. One of them consists of seventeen stanzas of seventeen lines each, and covers eight pages of fine print! It is bad enough, certainly, to encounter such young epics upon every third or fourth page, but when the author sandwiches between them long critical discussions—chiefly favorable—of their meters, rhymes and images, the limit of human endurance is reached. Suppose all the poets of America were to adopt this sinister method of smuggling their rhapsodies into American homes! The thought is appalling!

LORIMER OF THE NORTHWEST—

by Harold Bindloss.

(*Stokes*, \$1.50)

Another of Mr. Bindloss's vigorous tales of the Canadian frontier. There is good red blood in everything he writes, but it would seem advisable for him to turn out fewer books.

THE MISADVENTURES OF MARJORY—

by James B. Naylor.

(*Clark*, \$1.50)

A short and diverting comedy, written with considerable spirit and humor. The love story is safe and sane.

THE PULSE OF LIFE—

by Mrs. Belloc Lowndes.

(*Dodd-Mead*, \$1.50)

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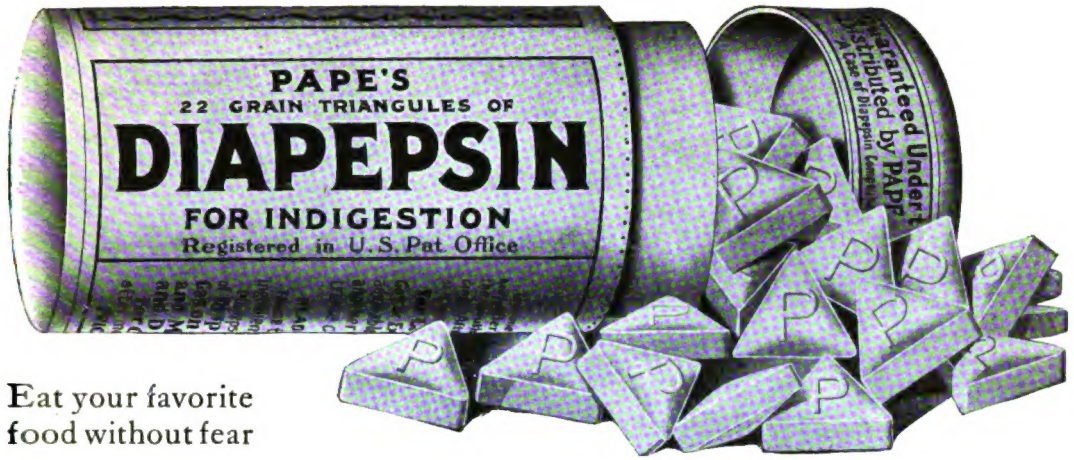
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(Continued on page 166)



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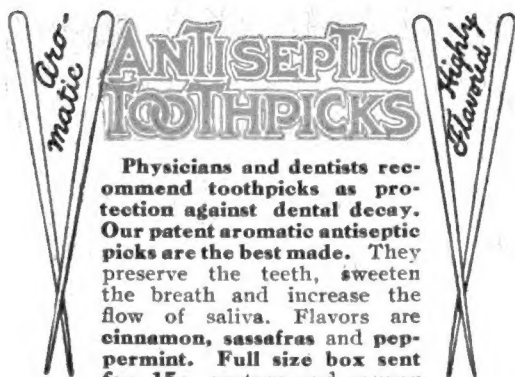
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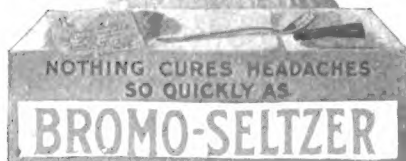
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